

DOCTORAL THESIS

What do psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients?

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**What do psychotherapists say about the importance, if
any, of theory in their work with clients?**

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of PsychD**

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Abstract

This thesis describes a narrative analysis which explored what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients. This research question was chosen due to both being important to the researcher's development as a psychotherapist, and also because of how it related to fundamental and important questions of what psychotherapy is, and how it is best understood. A review of relevant literature revealed how psychotherapy could be understood as being theory-driven, yet also encompassing arguably less-theorised features, with the philosophy of Wittgenstein recognised for having relevance to this debate. Literature pertaining to the question of when theory may become more important to psychotherapists was also reviewed, with theory-driven modes of activity by psychotherapists found to sometimes be due to their own anxiety. After consideration of various methodological issues, in terms of researching what psychotherapists *say*, and the difficulty of researching theory through using a method containing theoretical principles itself, narrative analysis was eventually chosen as an appropriate research method. Six UKCP psychotherapists were interviewed, and their narratives analysed individually, before being summarised as more general findings. Discussion of these findings suggested that whilst theory was generally important to psychotherapists, their relationships to theory were also found to be complex and changeable, with a particular contribution to knowledge of the research being the understanding that psychotherapists may construct and renegotiate their relationships to theory through conversations with others. Possible implications arising from this research were then explored, both in terms of what it might mean for psychotherapeutic practice, and also for future research. The research was then critiqued before being concluded.

Contents

Acknowledgements	5
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Origins of the question	6
1.2 Relevance of the question	7
2. Literature Review	10
2.1 What is theory?	10
2.2 Theory in psychotherapy	11
2.3 How important is theory in psychotherapy?	16
2.4 Theory as important in psychotherapy	18
2.5 Theory as less important in psychotherapy	22
2.6 Questioning the importance of theory: Wittgenstein	27
2.7 When is theory important in psychotherapy?	35
2.8 Interpretation	40
2.9 Alternatives to interpretation	44
3. Methodology	48
3.1 Situating the research in a qualitative paradigm	51
3.2 Researching what psychotherapists say	56
3.3 Researching theory	67
3.4 Research methods	71
3.5 Narrative analysis	78
4. Method	89
4.1 Ethical considerations	89

4.2 Risk assessment	91
4.3 Participant recruitment	92
4.4 Interviews	94
4.5 Transcriptions	96
4.6 Analysis	100
5. Analysis and Findings	105
5.1 Alice's story	106
5.2 Annette's story	110
5.3 Eleanor's story	118
5.4 Yasmin's story	125
5.5 Kevin's story	135
5.6 Eva's story	142
5.7 Overall findings	147
6. Discussion	153
6.1 The findings and the introduction	153
6.2 The findings and the literature	157
6.3 Contribution to knowledge	168
6.4 Implications for practice and research	170
7. Critique and Conclusion	174
7.1 Narrative analysis: a critique	174
7.2 Epistemic and personal reflexivity	178
7.3 Conclusion	183
References	184
Appendices	200

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Origins of the question

The research question originated from reflecting on my practice as a volunteer and trainee counsellor/psychotherapist around the end of 2012. My experience, as I remember it, was frequently one of bewilderment. I often felt uncertain with my clients, at a loss of what sense to make of their words, and of what I could say to them which would be to their benefit. This was perhaps to be expected at this stage of the psychotherapy and counselling course that I was on. The first year of the training had been relatively clear, in that it focused on phenomenology and the person-centred approach. However, the following year I found both much more intellectually interesting and yet much harder to integrate into practice. During this second year I learned more about existential and postmodern philosophy, as well as psychoanalysis. In other words, there was a great deal more theoretical content. This was what I wanted; I had found the first year lacking in theory. However, now introduced to the thought of various philosophers and psychoanalysts I began to find myself feeling increasingly uncomfortable when working with clients. I didn't know what to do with what I had learned. What role did it play in my practice? Was it informing how I worked? Sometimes it didn't feel that there was enough theory in my mind. Was that because I didn't know these theories thoroughly enough? Did being a good therapist require understanding lots of theory? I certainly didn't feel like a particularly good therapist and that I had a lot to learn. Did that mean that I was lacking in knowledge of theory? Or if it wasn't theory that was important, then what was?

As well as the anxieties I felt in my practice, the question also originated from a consideration of the training I was on. The training is described as one which “follows phenomenology through to post-phenomenology, and along the way learn(s) from humanistic/existential philosophy and psychoanalytic and European post-modernist thought” (Loewenthal, 2011: 138). It is described by Loewenthal (2011) as 'post-existential' and aims to give “primacy to practice” (p3), in that it trains psychotherapists to understand the value of “starting with practice and then consider[ing] the implications, rather than the applications, of theory” (2011: 3). I was unsure about what this meant. Did it mean to attempt to practice psychotherapy free of any theory at all? Was this possible? Or was it referring perhaps more to the value of prioritising one's experience of their own psychotherapeutic practice above any theory? Ultimately I was confused about what sort of psychotherapist I was training to be, and about what sort of psychotherapist I wanted to become.

This confusion led to a desire to question the importance of theory to psychotherapists, both for my own development as a psychotherapist, but also to understand more about psychotherapy generally.

1.2 Relevance of the question

Questioning the importance of theory to psychotherapists appeared to relate to many important debates within the field of psychotherapy, most obviously to the relationship between the theory and practice of psychotherapy. How does one inform the other? How important is theory in practice? What does it mean to talk about theory and practice in this way? Many books talk about the theory and practice of psychotherapy. Is this dichotomy

helpful?

If theory is not so important, then what is? And how would it make sense to talk about psychotherapy apart from in theory? Psychotherapy is a field which, one could argue, employs theoretical terms from the outset. This can be understood by considering how psychotherapists may answer the question, 'what sort of psychotherapist are you?' The typical responses: psychoanalytic; person-centred; cognitive-behavioural, all describe the psychotherapist as identifying with a certain theoretical tradition, or if they are 'integrative', as identifying with more than one. It is through theory - or similar terms, such as modality or approach - that psychotherapists tend to make sense of each another, and perhaps also themselves. However, if theory was found not to be so important to their work, then how might psychotherapists talk about what they do?

Questioning the importance of theory to psychotherapists also helps to explore the sorts of relationships that psychotherapists have with theory. For instance, is theory something for a psychotherapist to *know*? Is it a tool for them to *use*? How psychotherapists may construct their identities in relation to theory, and indeed knowledge in general, will be a major focus for the thesis.

The questions that the research will attempt to answer may be summarised as follows:

- 1) How important is theory to psychotherapy? Do psychotherapists consider it to be foundational, in that it is fundamental to their psychotherapeutic practice, or do they regard it as relatively unimportant?

- 2) When is theory important in psychotherapy? What may increase or decrease the importance that psychotherapists ascribe to theory?

Through exploring these two sets of questions a third more general cluster of questions will also be considered:

- 3) In what ways is theory important in psychotherapy? How do psychotherapists make use of theory? How might the relationships that psychotherapists have with theory be talked about? How do psychotherapists construct their identities in relation to theory?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 What is theory?

Before exploring literature that relates to the topic of the importance of theory in psychotherapy, it is first necessary to understand what the word 'theory' might mean.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (1989) provides a number of meanings for the term theory, mainly derived from the Greek term *theoria*. Theory is described as having connotations with vision, or seeing, “a sight, a spectacle....contemplation”; with method, “a systematic statement of rules or principles to be followed”; with science and truth, “a statement of what are held to be the general laws, principles or causes of something known or observed”; with conjecture, “a hypothesis proposed”; and as something which may be differentiated from activity: theory is “the knowledge or statement of the facts on which it depends... as distinguished from the *practice* of it” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989: 902, italics in original).

These definitions all have relevance for the present research. The question of how theory relates to practice in psychotherapy is particularly important for this thesis. Likewise, the extent to which theory in psychotherapy is regarded as similar to either truth or conjecture is also explored in terms of whether this affects its importance to psychotherapists. It should be mentioned here that the concept of 'truth' is used presently and henceforth as described in the *correspondence theory of truth*, namely that “propositions are true if and only if they correspond with the facts” (Honderich, 1995: 166). The idea of theory as akin

to method will be considered in terms of its implications for the method of *this* piece of research, and lastly, the dominance of the visual metaphor when making sense of theory is returned to.

Theory may be understood as a slippery term. It is important to note that psychotherapists may employ what might be understood as more personal theories, and which do not necessarily exist as generalised abstractions in the same way as more 'official' theories typically do. Sandler and Dreher refer to these theories as “*implicit*, in that they have been created outside the analyst's consciousness during the course of analytic work and in the context of that work” (1996: 3, italics in original). Whilst it is important to bear in mind that theory is a term which may refer to something personal and intuitive, theory may be understood as simply a “structured set of ideas” (McLeod, 2003: 43) for the purposes of the following research in order not to limit any discussion unnecessarily.

2.2 Theory in psychotherapy

Analysis of the literature reveals that there are two conventional views of the role of theory in psychotherapy. These two views differ in respect to the claims they make on 'truth'.

The first of these is that theory is viewed in a similar way to its conventional role in the physical sciences. Theory provides an account of the important features of reality, some of which may be hidden or obscured, but thanks to theory, are illuminated and revealed. In psychotherapy examples of this view of theory are evident in Freud (1925/1989) and Rogers (1959). Theories in this sense are candidates for truth, as they are presented as

having correspondence to a set of facts, and appear to have a primary function of *explanation*.

The second of these is that theory is viewed as a kind of lens to see through, or an interpretive framework, helping to provide the user of the theory with an increase of understanding of the thing being examined. In psychotherapy such a view of theory is evident in Spence (1982), or Rycroft (1966). Theories in this sense are not seen as necessarily being true, in that they correspond to a set of objectively verifiable facts, but whose primary function appears to be that of pragmatism (Fishman, 1999), and of aiding *understanding*. These two views of theory in psychotherapy will now be discussed further.

Theory as explaining a 'truth'

Many of the founders of the prominent schools in psychotherapy believed their approaches were objective, and that their theories could be subject to empirical test and verified accordingly. This was the case for both Freud and Rogers, who viewed their psychotherapeutic theories as being truthful through their correspondence to facts.

Rogers (1959) described his humanistic person-centred therapy in theoretical propositions, producing a seventy page 'scientific statement'. His paper, *A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centred framework* attempted to provide a general explanation for how psychotherapy works and the personality factors that affect these workings.

Freud described psychoanalysis as “the science of unconscious mental processes” ((1925/1989: 41), and appeared to frequently regard his work as that of a scientist-

practitioner. This understanding of Freud is evident in the work of Rapaport and Gill (1959), who analysed psychoanalytic theory. Their aim was to clarify the theoretical basis for psychoanalysis, an endeavour referred to as *metapsychology*. “At some point in the development of every science, the assumptions on which it is built must be clarified. Freud meant metapsychology to do just that for psycho-analysis” (Rapaport & Gill, 1959: 153). They therefore presented a range of philosophical assumptions upon which psychoanalytic theory rests, and discussed how these assumptions may inform certain theoretical propositions which in turn relate to observational phenomena. Their paper shows how psychoanalytic theory may be structured, and how this theory can operate at different levels of abstraction. It also shows how they were concerned with presenting psychoanalysis as something similar to a 'hard' science, and that they were doing this under what they thought was the instruction of Freud.

Analysing the scientific credentials of psychoanalysis was also the aim for Grunbaum (1984) who similarly attempted to show psychoanalysis as empirically verifiable. However, unlike Rapaport and Gill, Grunbaum instead focused on what is termed *clinical theory*. Whilst metapsychology appears to refer to theory dealing with the fundamental structures of the mind, clinical theory has correspondence to a practical application (e.g. Eagle, 1984; Lacewing 2015). To separate them entirely appears difficult. As Eagle asserts, “the very idea of purely clinical theory untainted by any trace of metapsychology is illusory. For example, the very notion of unconscious wishes and aims, so central to the clinical theory of psychoanalysis, inevitably entails metapsychological assumptions and considerations” (1984: 149). Despite this, Grunbaum's focus was on the fact that Freud “saw himself entitled to proclaim the specificity of his clinical theory entirely on the strength of a secure and direct epistemic warrant from the observations he made of his

patients and himself” (1984: 6). Whilst Grunbaum ultimately realised that in using these criteria psychoanalysis failed to be empirically verifiable, what is important for the present discussion is that he wanted to show psychoanalysis “as a causal explanatory system built on the model of the natural sciences rather than in the interpretive account characteristic of hermeneutics” (Frosh, 1997: 47). Theory was therefore regarded as something which provides an explanation of an objectively verifiable reality.

To summarise this view it is worth quoting Eagle (1984) who describes the desire for psychotherapists to theorise in a manner common to the hard sciences:

Let us say that one has a complete empathic sense of what another is experiencing (or even what another has experienced). As soon as one goes beyond that point however, and wants to explain why he is experiencing what he does, one has exhausted the possibilities of empathic accounts. Would one want to limit one's explanation to an (empathic) identification of what another is experiencing?... The impulse to develop an account that would explain observed phenomena on a more theoretical and abstract level is the impulse behind all the scientific-theoretical endeavours to find the order and reality underlying appearances (Eagle, 1984: 152-153).

Theory as aiding understanding

Psychotherapists may also regard a theory as an interpretive framework. This view of theory is one where it is regarded as being primarily concerned with increasing understanding for the user of the theory rather than representing any 'truth'.

Rycroft (1985) was also amongst those who analysed psychoanalytic theory, but disagreed with Rapaport and Gill (1959) by instead insisting that psychoanalysis was more suited to

being a theory of semantics rather than one of causality. Rycroft writes that Freud was aiming to make psychoanalysis a science, yet the causality normally evident in scientific practice was lacking. "I know of no instance in Freud's writing of his claiming to have predicted in advance the outcome of any choice or decision made by a patient" (1985: 43). Instead, what Freud conceived of, according to Rycroft, was better thought of as a theory of meaning, and not one of explanation. "It can be argued that much of Freud's work was really semantic and that he made a revolutionary discovery in semantics... but that, owing to his scientific training and allegiance, he formulated his findings in the conceptual framework of the physical sciences" (1985: 44). Rycroft's argument that classic psychoanalytic theory may be better thought of as being more concerned with meaning, rather than having an inherent explanatory value, shows us that theories do not necessarily need to be causal to still be important in psychotherapy.

The idea of theory in psychotherapy being closer to something which aids understanding rather than explaining some aspect of an objectively verifiable reality is also evident in the work of Spence (1982, 1987) who felt that the concept of 'historical truth' within psychoanalysis was problematic. Searching for such a thing, argued Spence, was to see the analyst as a type of archaeologist who could find the root of the patient's difficulties in a repressed previous event. For Spence, such a view is misconstrued. "No interpretation is sacred. If context is boundless and ever-expanding, the grounds for reaching a conclusion about this or that meaning are forever shifting. An archive can be constructed, but its contents will always be open to interpretation or elaboration" (1987: 91). Spence appears to be saying that there is no one final interpretation or reading; any understanding is always provisional. When psychoanalysis or psychotherapy are understood in this way, then the corresponding understanding of psychotherapeutic theory is also altered. Theory

becomes more similar to another story, providing new understandings and perspectives, rather than explaining a singular truth.

What might these two views of theory in psychotherapy tell us about the importance of theory to the discipline and its practitioners? In other words, is the importance that a psychotherapist gives to theory dependent on which of these two views she subscribes to?

It seems reasonable to assume that if the psychotherapist believes a theory as something which is true, in that it explains reality, then she must give it importance. If our hypothetical psychotherapist views theory merely as way of aiding understanding, however, then perhaps theory may be less important in her work with her clients. But this is not necessarily so. Theory may still be important to her even if she did not feel that it described any fundamental truth. For instance, she may simply find it a useful way of working. Ultimately, these two views of theory do not answer the question of how important theory is to psychotherapy and to psychotherapists. The importance of theory and the place of truth do not necessarily have a clear relationship. The importance of theory in psychotherapy requires further exploration.

2.3 How important is theory in psychotherapy?

Literature searches revealed a complex picture. Perhaps most famously, Wampold's (2001) review of outcome focused studies demonstrated that the relationship between the client and the psychotherapist was more important than any other factor in affecting the efficacy of psychotherapy. His findings show how any orientation or theory which the therapist may identify themselves with - when reduced to specific aspects contained in a given psychotherapeutic treatment – was regarded as less important to the outcome of the

therapy than more general features of psychotherapy which were not regarded as theory or orientation specific. Wampold's (2001) findings support Frank (1974) who earlier had identified the importance of common, cross-cultural, and non-theory-specific features in affecting the outcome of psychotherapy. These findings, amongst others (e.g., Strupp, 1978), support the notion that unified, common factors, are as important, if not more so, than modality-specific or theory-driven aspects of psychotherapy, when attempting to distil what is important in the psychotherapeutic endeavour.

There is other relevant literature. For instance, the topic of theoretical integrationism has received scrutiny, with there being evidence that many psychotherapists favour an eclectic approach (Norcross, 1986). Research has also been conducted into how theory may be used by psychotherapists in a postmodern perspective (Polkinghorne, 1992), again revealing a “more fragmented, locally or personally constructed integrationist or eclectic approach to knowledge” (McLeod, 2003: 62).

Whilst these studies provide valuable insights, an exploration into the importance that theory has for psychotherapists remains merited. The understanding of 'common factors' like the therapeutic relationship, and the rise of theoretical integration are important, but they do not necessarily tell us too much about the importance of theory in psychotherapy. For the therapeutic relationship can easily be regarded as theorised, (e.g. Rogers, 1959), and the increase in theoretical eclecticism only suggests that psychotherapists do not regard a *singular* modality as especially important. The questions of how important theory is in general to them, when it might change in importance, and the relationships that they have with theory require further investigation. Discussion of the importance of theory, for psychotherapists, and in psychotherapy more generally, may be undertaken through an

examination of various features of psychotherapy. Some of these features can be argued as demonstrating that theory plays a vital role in psychotherapy; others suggestive of it being less important. These will now be explored.

2.4 Theory as important in psychotherapy

Theory as prevalent within psychotherapeutic discourse

Theory may be understood as being important in psychotherapy through the frequency in which the term 'theory', or theoretical concepts, occur in literature and discussion, both formal and informal, about psychotherapy.

In a formal sense, a literature search using the terms 'theory' and 'psychotherapy' reveals various titles beginning *The Theory and Practice of...* (e.g., Yalom, 1970; Corey, 2013). From this, it may be concluded that theory is typically regarded as a vital part of psychotherapy; one half of the theory-practice dichotomy commonly used in discussion of psychotherapy.

The importance of theory may also be evident in noting the number of theories within the field of psychotherapy. Karasu (1986) identified over four hundred different theoretical approaches to psychotherapy. McLeod (2003) argues that this proliferation of theories may be due to a number of factors, ranging from alternative views of humanity to a desire for commercial gain. Whatever the reasons - and that is not to say the reasons are unimportant - what is notable for the present point is that the vast quantity of theories in psychotherapy perhaps suggest theory to be important to psychotherapy.

Less formally, we may notice how theory seems to form the discourse in which psychotherapists often may talk to one another. As mentioned in the introduction, psychotherapists' identifications with theories is a way in which they may make sense of their own professional identity. It appears that theoretical language is embedded within the fabric of psychotherapy, and indeed it seems difficult to speak about psychotherapy without recourse to theoretical language. In this way, theories may be regarded as languages (e.g., Ryle, 1978), or as conversations (e.g., Rorty, 1979), and the fact that these languages and conversations are so prevalent and dominant, may again be suggestive of theory being important in psychotherapy.

Theory as important within medical paradigm

It may also be argued that theory plays an important role in psychotherapy when psychotherapy is understood as existing within a medical paradigm. Psychotherapy operates within this paradigm insofar as it establishes criteria for outcomes (whether the therapy is successful or not) and a technique for achieving them, which in turn is based on an identified problem. If these features of psychotherapy are privileged then theory appears to be important.

For instance, Klein defined successful therapy as being when “persecutory anxiety and schizoid mechanisms are diminished and the patient can work through to the depressive position” (1956/1986: 228-229). This occurs when “love and hate can be better synthesized, splitting processes - a fundamental defence against anxiety - as well as repressions lessen while the ego gains in strength and coherence; the cleavage between idealized and persecutory objects diminishes” (Klein, 1952/1986: 210). What is important here is that the success of psychotherapy is predicated upon the fulfilment of criteria born

out of theoretical conceptions. Psychotherapy that adheres to principles of this sort appears to privilege theory. Sandler and Dreher (1996) summarise this point:

...different theoretical viewpoints and emphases, with their different theoretical languages and metaphors, have contributed to the fact that the formulation of 'aim' and 'goal' has become incapable of being encompassed by a single simple formulation; its meaning is very dependent on the theoretical background of the author, and on the phase of the analytic process being considered (Sandler & Dreher, 1996: 2).

It is the argument here that such 'aims' and 'goals', which appear to entail theory, are particularly evident when the psychotherapist is working in a quasi-medical paradigm.

Psychotherapy as applied theory

Theory may also be understood as important within psychotherapy when the practice of psychotherapy is considered a direct extension of theoretical knowledge. If this theoretical knowledge is, in turn, derived from research, then theory is both the product of research and as also the basis for practice. It should be mentioned that this quasi-scientific understanding of psychotherapy is not always evident in the literature. For instance, Morrow-Bradley and Elliott (1986) reported that therapists in general did not feel that research played a significant role in their work. However, when psychotherapy is viewed as an enterprise in which a 'perfect knowledge' (McLeod, 2003) may eventually be derived through research, then the construction of theory from this knowledge, and its subsequent application, would directly inform psychotherapeutic practice.

For instance, Paul said that the aim of research was to lead to the identification of “what treatment, by *whom*, is most effective for *this* individual with *that* specific condition, and

under *which* set of circumstances” (1967: 111, italics in original). Similarly, Singer believed that “psychotherapists must share a value presumption that knowledge about human behaviour is susceptible to systematic enquiry through a variety of scientific procedures and that modifications both of theory and practice must reflect the most recent findings of empirical research” (1980: 372). Both quotes share the viewpoint that psychotherapy is fully researchable: that research can generate psychotherapeutic theory which in turn prescribes psychotherapeutic practice.

Eysenck was also insistent that psychotherapy should exist as an application of theoretical knowledge, opining that “what are needed in science and medicine are clear-cut theories leading to specific procedures applicable to specific types of patients” (1970: 45). More recently Magnavita and Anchin emphasised the benefits of psychotherapeutic practice being closely related to the theory produced through empirical research: “science and practice working in synchrony can advance our knowledge of human behaviour and refine how we help those who need our services” (2014: *xi*).

Perhaps the clearest example of psychotherapy being a direct extension of theory is in the use of manualised treatments. Wilson reports that “the advantages of manualised treatments include well-documented efficacy, less reliance on intuitive judgement, and greater ease in training and supervising therapists in specific clinical strategies and techniques” (2007: 105). Again the view of the psychotherapist is that of a good scientist or doctor. What is privileged here is the idea of standardization, where every psychotherapist would be producing essentially the same therapy by following the same procedure. Theory may be seen as being important to psychotherapy in that it is involved in the production of the manual from which psychotherapists work.

2.5 Theory as less important in psychotherapy

Whilst the features of psychotherapy discussed above suggest theory to potentially be of great importance to the work of psychotherapists, there are other aspects of psychotherapy which appear less theoretically imbued, or appear to support a notion of psychotherapeutic practice which appears less structured by theory.

Not-knowing and waiting

One of these aspects of psychotherapy which is arguably less-theorized is the notion of not-knowing (e.g., Bion, 1973/1990; Winnicott, 1971).

The idea of not-knowing shares similarities to the notion of negative capability, with the poet Keats (1899) widely accredited with using this phrase first in a letter to his brothers. “Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (in Cullen et al., 2014: 259). It is perhaps with this in mind that Bion writes:

Instead of trying to bring a brilliant, intelligent, knowledgeable light to bear on obscure problems, I suggest we bring to mind a diminution of the 'light' – a penetrating beam of darkness; a reciprocal of the searchlight... The darkness would be so absolute that it would achieve a luminous absolute vacuum. So that, if any object existed, however faint, it would show up very clearly (Bion, 1990: 20).

What Bion appears to be advocating is that the psychotherapist should abandon her desire to interpret the client's words, and to place them in a theoretically framed context. Rather,

she should try to wait until an idea emerges from the psychotherapeutic setting itself, and so attempt to be open to such an idea emerging. It should be said that Bion may be interpreted as being perhaps covertly theoretical in this description. After all, in suggesting how psychotherapists may approach not-knowing; he is abstracting from the particular to the general. However, it is argued here that emphasising the importance of not-knowing is only somewhat theoretical, and less theoretically imbued than many other features of psychotherapy, features which may be understood as attempting to 'know' what the client may be meaning.

Not-knowing, and not using a theory to know, means that other aspects of psychotherapeutic practice must be privileged. One of these is the quality of patience; the ability to wait. Winnicott felt it important for the psychotherapist to be able to wait until the 'right' moment to say something. "If only we can wait, the patient arrives at understanding creatively and with immense joy... I think I interpret mainly to let the patient know the limits of my understanding. The principle is that it is the patient and only the patient who has the answers" (1971: 102). This waiting, as Gordon writes, should not be confused with passivity. "It is a manifestation of respect for the patient and of responsibility to him" (1999: 94).

Levinasian ethics

Gordon's quote leads to a further less theoretically imbued feature of psychotherapy. The philosophy of Levinas (1981) places an ethical relationship between psychotherapist and client above any theory. Levinas regarded ethics as primary, a 'first philosophy' which must precede any theories about epistemology or ontology. "I believe... that the ethical relationship with the other is just and primary and original as ontology – if not more so"

(1981: 61). If Levinas's ideas are incorporated into psychotherapy - and it may be argued that psychotherapy should be concerned with ethics (e.g., Gordon, 1999) - theory cannot be privileged, as it is the psychotherapist's job and duty to privilege the other and to be responsible for them. As Gordon explains, ethical responsibility to the other precludes theory-driven psychotherapy. It "is the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. It is what constitutes me as a human subject" (1999: 51). Levinas's responsibility to the other can be understood in varying ways, but what is clear is that ethics is not simply a structured set of ideas which can be applied to the individual case. For Levinas, respect for the others' otherness is paramount. To assimilate them into a pre-existing theoretical structure is to be unethical, and also inauthentic. His views are paraphrased by Gans: "we cannot place the other into our own light, and incorporate the other into our own story without destroying the possibility of meeting in the genuine sense" (1989: 86). Gordon writes that Levinas's line, "without the succour of certainty or authoritative reassurance" (Gordon, 1999: 59) should be a motto for psychotherapists. "Contrary to common belief there are no rules, no techniques. 'Ethical codes' to which we are required to adhere if we wish to be registered surely only tell us what we know. It is not that 'anything goes' but what goes is a matter each of us has to work out for ourselves" (Gordon, 1999: 59).

Levinas' (1981) writings on language, and the saying and the said, also have relevance for the present point. Levinas distinguishes between "language as *saying* is an ethical openness to the other; as that which is *said* – reduced to a fixed identity or synchronized presence – is an ontological closure to the other" (1981: 65, italics in original). It may be interpreted that psychotherapeutic practice links to the saying: the dynamic continually changing present, whereas the said refers to the established stable tradition: of which

psychotherapeutic theory may be considered a representation. Levinas may be understood, therefore, as valuing and identifying the availability and ethical openness which constitutes the saying (psychotherapeutic practice) in contrast to the firmness of the said (theory).

Thoughtfulness and Originality

Further less theorised features of psychotherapy may include Bion's (1962) conception of reverie, and Winnicott's (1971) idea of true and false selves.

Bion did not believe that the mental attitude required of the psychotherapist was one which invited her to use theoretical concepts when with patients (Symington & Symington, 1996). Bion instead thought that the stance required by the psychotherapist was one of reverie, “that state of mind which is open to....and capable of the reception of the infant's projective identifications whether they are felt by the infant to be good or bad” (1962: 36). Despite the Kleinian terminology in this definition, Symington summarises simply that “the state of reverie essentially means that the analyst is prepared to be changed by his patient” (1986: 291). The idea of the psychotherapist allowing herself to be changed by her patient perhaps contrasts with the understanding of the therapist as the scientific or medical expert. As Symington explains, “Bion, therefore, did not agree with the often-stated dictum within psychoanalytic communities that clinicians need a theory as a sort of platform from which to observe and codify the communications of the patient” (1986: 293). Instead, to be in a state of reverie is to allow oneself to be moved or altered by the client.

Bion's concept of reverie bears similarities to Winnicott's (1971) notion of the true self.

This idea was regarded by Winnicott as the source of human authenticity, “the creative originality... considered to be an innate characteristic of infancy, realized through maternal care” (Phillips, 2007: 133). For Winnicott, it is the ability of the mother, in responding to her child with a responsiveness and spontaneity, to nurture this true self and to foster a corresponding capacity in the child for creative freedom. The child desires this response from her mother, and for Winnicott (1971), so does the client in their psychotherapist. “This demand may come verbally, or the emotional intensity of the situation generated may place a responsibility on the analyst to act...the patient is wanting a gestural response that comes out of the analyst's True Self, which by definition has no antecedent” (Symington, 1986: 315).

Lomas (1999) also emphasises the importance of creativity and spontaneity in psychotherapy. For Lomas a creative and spontaneous psychotherapist would

enable us to feel we are in the presence of someone who is listening without prejudice, is free from an attempt to fit us into a formula, and who would not condemn us or convey a sense of superiority; there would be an atmosphere in which risks can be taken, fun can be had, closeness is possible, and the relationship feels alive (Lomas, 1999: 77).

These aspects of psychotherapy appear less theorised, and require psychotherapists to be thoughtful and authentic about the way they practice. Reverie asks psychotherapists to give themselves freedom in their thinking, and to be open, in a profound sense, to their patients. Similarly, responding to clients' from a 'true self' means that psychotherapists should have the capacity to go beyond the familiar and traditional in their therapeutic practice. The creative processes which are considered here appear to represent features of

psychotherapy which are less theoretically imbued than those considered earlier.

2.6 Questioning the importance of theory: Wittgenstein

The literature review began with defining theory, before exploring how theory in psychotherapy is conventionally viewed and understood. Some literature pertaining to the importance of theory to psychotherapists, and in psychotherapy was then explored. Through an exploration of psychotherapy, theory was shown to be regarded as very important to the enterprise. However, also considered were features of psychotherapy which appear less beholden to theory. Within this debate it is perhaps important to consider some philosophical perspectives, especially Wittgenstein's later work. In this period of his philosophy, it is argued that Wittgenstein shows us how we may fail to pay enough attention to the active, socially governed, and specific ways in which we learn language (and are inducted into other cultural practices), and instead tend to focus on generalisations about individuals' minds. His thought has many implications for the debate about the importance of theory to psychotherapists and psychotherapy.

Wittgenstein's method: language-games

Wittgenstein aimed to provide a perspicuous representation of our word use. "The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of the account we give, the way we look at things" (Wittgenstein, 1958: 49). A perspicuous representation is an attempt to give a comprehensive account of our use of language, to get a bird's eye view on our language use (Budd, 1989). Wittgenstein did this through noticing the connections between our uses of words, and so was interested in the similarities and differences in the uses of words in language. Wittgenstein used the

concept of language-games to shed light on how words are used in different contexts, and attempted to show similarities and differences between these language games.

Wittgenstein attempted to describe how we are liable to go wrong when we describe our own uses of words; how doing this can easily result in confusion. What Wittgenstein was showing was how we tend to misunderstand our own language in reflection upon it. “When we want to describe the use of a word – isn't it like wanting to make a portrait of a face? I see it clearly; the expression of these features is well known to me; and if I had to paint it I shouldn't know where to begin. And if I do make a picture it is wholly inadequate” (Wittgenstein 1980, in Budd, 1989: 5).

Of significance to the present research is the fact that Wittgenstein focuses on the inherent disparity between our use of language and our ability to *describe* our use of it. Simply put, “the mastery of a technique and the ability to give an accurate account of the technique are very different capacities” (Budd, 1989: 4). This might be thought of as evidence of a disjunction between the theory of something and the practice of it, and may be interpreted as suggesting that psychotherapists should perhaps be wary of attaching too much importance to theory in their work with clients.

Theory necessitates generalisations

Theory is concerned with generalisations, and to theorise is to abstract and to decontextualise. Wittgenstein called into question this mode of operation, by emphasising how our use of language was contextually governed, and that what was signified by a word in one circumstance was not necessarily signified by the same word in a different circumstance. Theory, and the act of theorising, may over-simplify word use, and not

appreciate the different roles words may play depending on context.

Wittgenstein use of the term 'language-games' “is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of activity, or a form of life” (1958: 11, italics in original). Language, for Wittgenstein, is not just a tool that we use to describe either our internal thoughts or an external reality. It is a practice; an activity in its own right. As Heaton states, “we learn meaning first by learning how to use words in particular situations, not by isolating them and associating them with an object, as we do in looking up a meaning in a dictionary. Similarly, we can learn to play a game by watching it and then taking part” (2010: 110). Wittgenstein's concept of a language-game shows how language is an activity, a cultural practice, where the rules are learned through our initiation into it.

What Wittgenstein also appears to be saying is that words only make sense within a particular context. Or rather, that the sense they are conventionally thought to have is due to the familiarity of the language-game which they exist within. “Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all” (Wittgenstein, 1958:31).

To theorise is to abstract from the particular, but Wittgenstein makes us aware of the perils of doing so. For Heaton, psychotherapeutic theory tends to have “a confused notion of logic which fails to trust the way the patient uses language, and ignores the way we live and have been brought up plays a part in the use and meaning of words” (2010: 113). To relate the words of a client in a psychotherapeutic session to a theory, involves, to a greater or lesser extent, a decontextualisation of their speech. The specific is assimilated into the

general, and in this assimilation, the unique context of the client's speech is diminished:

You say to me: “You understand this expression don't you? Well then – I am using it in the sense you are familiar with. - As if the sense were an atmosphere accompanying the word, which is carried with it into every kind of application (Wittgenstein, 1958: 48).

Wittgenstein appears to be implying that theory assumes a certain stability in our use of language that allows generalities to be made, whereas he believed that “words only have meaning within a background of cultural practices and basic behavioural patterns and responses of human beings. A word's meaning is its place within a language game, against the background of human life” (Heaton, 2014: 71). Wittgenstein brings to our attention that “if we attend to our use of words in our life, the description of our concepts is always much more complicated, less determinate, more open-ended, than our belief in our theories led us to think” (Heaton, 2014: 28). The generalities found in theory do not take into account the fluctuation of meaning that language has when it is understood as context and practice bound. “Our craving for generality and the contemptuous attitude with the particular case leads us astray” (Wittgenstein, 1958: 18 in Heaton, 2010: 7).

Theorising may lead to a reification of psychological concepts

Wittgenstein felt that the language used to describe our thoughts and feelings should not be the domain of specialised knowledge. “Psychological concepts are just everyday concepts. They are not concepts newly fashioned by science for its own purpose...” (1980: 62). Wittgenstein felt that as psychological words and concepts are like other words and concepts, then they too have a variety of use. As Budd puts it, “philosophical problems about the nature of the mind arise... from confusion about the use of our own

psychological vocabulary, and this confusion can be dissipated only by gaining a synoptic view of our own language of psychology” (1989: 7). However, it may be argued that psychotherapeutic theory attempts to elevate words above their normal use and so make a clear account of their usage even more problematic.

Heaton (2010) provides a critique of the use of theoretical language commonplace in psychoanalysis and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT):

The technique of giving names and formulae to what has been observed, the nominalising tendency, in which nouns are derived from verbs, is an example of the ascendancy of the object and the concomitant mystification of reality....It elides the voice that, active or passive, participates in a particular action and leaves a reified, intransitive and obscure given in its place (Heaton, 2010: 28).

Heaton is arguing that a psychotherapist who bases her practice upon a theory devalues the client's individual experience, removing the dynamic, contextually unfolding, personal nature of what the client is saying. Instead, theory may encourage an objectification or fetishisation of certain words, which undermines their complexity of use and the contexts in which they may be used. “No word alone has a meaning, if we did not understand language we could not even recognize words. If we leave the context out of our language and try to explain things, then we are in danger of not making sense” (Heaton, 2014: 71).

Wittgenstein recommends an approach based on the use of language which we understand and which tallies with what we already know. “A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words. - Our grammar is lacking in this sort of peripiscuity” (Wittgenstein, 1958: 49, italics in original). The elucidation that

Wittgenstein recommends is not achieved through a focus on the objectifying, technical language used in theories of psychotherapy, which may create a disjunction between them and the social practises in which they are first learned and made sense of. Heaton summarises:

If the word is empty, or we do not mean what we say, or the other is deprived of the usual criteria for judgement, then the word can become a curse. For the performative experience of the word is critical. The loosening of the bond between the living being and her language, leads to language becoming more and more vain. If the ethical connection between words, things, and human action is broken then there is a proliferation of vain words and theories with no evidence backing them up other than prestige and efficient advertising (Heaton, 2014: 47-48).

Theory may exaggerate 'mental processes'

Wittgenstein did not believe that we think, and then describe these thoughts in language. As Hacker, exclaims, “we must get away from the preconception that the fundamental role of the first-person psychological utterance is to describe how things are with us, to impart a piece of privileged information to others” (2000: 425).

For Wittgenstein, the idea of the 'inner', or indeed a mind, which may be represented through language is problematic. As Heaton puts it, “the reference of words is not to be understood in the mind's grasp of the things it thinks about... Thoughts are open to interpretation. Thought does not precede language but language precedes thought” (2010: 143). Wittgenstein could be interpreted as believing that theories such as psychoanalysis or CBT are flawed in that they rely upon a view of language which has correspondence to an inner mental state. This understanding of the relationship between mind and language is

perhaps best illustrated on the concept of 'mentalese' (Fodor, 1975). Mentalese may be summarised as the idea that we have an inner language that is the basis for all spoken language, in essence, that our thoughts may or may not be linguistically formed, but that these thoughts are modified into language, whose primary function is to describe and represent these thoughts. This idea of the 'inner' is pervasive. Heaton describes our fascination with it. "We are easily dazzled by an image of an ideal. We become transfixed by the picture that there must be something behind appearances, as there is a chemical structure which causes behaviour" (2014: 62).

Wittgenstein's contention with this idea was the importance that this view gave to individual mental processes. "One of the most dangerous ideas for a philosopher is, oddly enough, that we think with our heads" (Wittgenstein, 1981: 605-6). Wittgenstein aimed to show that language is best thought of as a mode of activity in a social and behavioural context, and is not necessarily an externalisation and product of our 'inner' worlds; something which theories such as CBT and psychoanalysis posit. "The inner is a delusion. That is: the whole context of ideas alluded to by this word is like a painted curtain drawn in front of the scene of the actual word use" (Wittgenstein, 1992: 84, in Heaton 2010: 169). Heaton describes how Wittgenstein exemplifies this argument by pointing out the flaw in our thinking that we calculate *within* our heads. Whilst mental arithmetic appears to be the preserve of the inner, its origins do not support this understanding. "We first have to calculate on paper or out loud before we can grasp what calculating in the head is. It is a misconception that what is 'inner' is a mental process that makes sense by inwardly observing it" (Heaton, 2000: 45).

It is important to understand that Wittgenstein is not stating that our thoughts or feelings

are not important. Rather, he is saying that we should not view our minds as having contents which may be represented in theory. Our language does not meaningfully represent our experience, as it were, at least not in the sense that it may describe 'inner' processes. "Meanings are not in the head or in the unconscious but are anchored by language in the physical environment and in social practice" (Heaton, 2010: 146). Theories in psychotherapy which focus on intrapsychic objects and processes fail to take into account that the meaning that these theories attempt to elucidate is not to be found in our minds but in the practice and activity of daily life; activity which gives us our language. For Wittgenstein, the whole idea of theories that attempt to understand human psychology through attempting to clarify an inner world are misguided as they do not place adequate attention on the individual's relationship to her environment. Heaton (2010) summarises Wittgenstein's (1958) 'private language argument'.

The language of sensation, such as that of tensions or needs, owes its meaning to its connections to the physical world; it is essentially shareable and would be meaningless if it were not. The idea of such a language that cannot be understood by anyone other than the experiencer is nonsense. The mental world cannot be detached from the physical world and retain meaning (Heaton, 2010: 179).

Wittgenstein's philosophy provides various implications for the present research. He appears to be making the point that we tend to underestimate the importance of the social contexts in which people learn language through engaging in the world around them. Specific words mean specific things depending on which context they occur, and they are learned through participation with others. Language, and therefore psychological concepts "cannot be understood apart from the intersubjective contexts in which they take form" (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984: 64). Wittgenstein's view here shares similarities with the

views of Gadamer (1975) who also emphasised the activity of thinking and theorising, believing that “*theoria* is a form of *praxis*” (Di Cesare, 2007: 115, italics from Di Cesare). Gadamer's understanding of the origins of the term theory echo Wittgenstein's emphasis on the importance of the social basis of our learning. “Theory is a way of acting, living, and being there with and through others, an active participation in what suddenly appears and offers itself to everyone as “shared property””(Di Cesare, 2007: 115).

Correspondingly, Wittgenstein appears to be showing us how we may continually over-estimate the importance of the opposite: that learning occurs privately, that language represents inner-experience, and that generalisations and theories are the way in which we make sense of the world around us. In short, Wittgenstein seems to be emphasising the activity and practises of human life, and questioning the importance of the theoretical and general.

2.7 When is theory important in psychotherapy?

The literature review has so far focused on how important theory is to psychotherapy and psychotherapists. It has done so by considering how theory is conventionally viewed and used in psychotherapy – either as an explanatory account of a ‘truth’ similar to that found in the human sciences; or as an interpretative framework which may aid understanding - before exploring some of the literature that explicitly refers to the importance of theory in psychotherapy.

Aspects of psychotherapy which appeared more theoretically imbued were then examined before some aspects of psychotherapy which appeared less theory-driven were discussed.

The chapter then focused on the contribution of Wittgenstein to the debate.

So far, the main focus has been on the first question in the introduction. Namely, how important theory is to psychotherapy and psychotherapists? Do psychotherapists consider it to be foundational, or is it not so important in psychotherapeutic practice? Question three in the introduction, pertaining to the relationships psychotherapists may have to theory has also been considered in the preceding discussion, and will continue to be explored. What has not been considered thus far, is question two: When is theory important in psychotherapy? What may increase or decrease the importance that psychotherapists ascribe to theory? There is no reason to assume that psychotherapists' relationships to theory are static, and the ensuing discussion attempts to explore when theory may become more (or less) important to them.

Phenomenology, Evenly-suspended attention, and the Analytic Attitude

How is it possible to investigate the change in a psychotherapist's relationship to theory? How can we identify when theory becomes more (or less) important to the therapist? One way of considering the issue is to explore the related - albeit different - question, of when and under what circumstances, psychotherapists interpret.

It is asserted here that the conventional psychoanalytic understanding of the concept of interpretation may be regarded as more theoretically-imbued than what may characterise the activity of the psychotherapist prior to such an interpretation being made. If this argument is accepted then it is a way of approaching the question of when theory becomes more important to psychotherapists and in psychotherapy. Snell appears to inquire about something similar when exploring what he refers to the “tension between analyst as

phenomenologist, and the analyst as theorist” (2013: 63).

What is happening before an interpretation is made? Psychoanalytic literature (e.g., Frosh, 1997) typically describes the patient as talking about whatever is on their mind; freely associating, with the analyst being non-selective in their attention. Freud recommends “simply in not directing one's notice to anything in particular and in maintaining the same 'evenly-suspended attention' (as I have called it) in the face of all one hears” (1912/1989: 357). Freud goes on, “to put it purely in terms of technique: 'He should simply listen, and not bother whether he is keeping anything in mind'” (p357) Freud justifies this approach on the basis that in selecting certain information from the client to attend to, the psychotherapist is “in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows” (p357)

This approach has much in common with phenomenology, which advocates a method which begins “in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge” (Husserl, in Moran, 2000: 126). As Snell puts it, “it was surely a phenomenologist's attempt to bracket off preconceptions and resist the wish to privilege one thing over another, to maintain calm attentiveness, which Freud was recommending” (2013: 45).

The phenomenological method attempts to get to the “pre-theoretical substrate of experience” (Critchley, 2001: 115). It involves an “overthrow of all previous assumptions to knowledge, and a questioning of many of our 'natural' intuitions about the nature of our mental process or the make-up of the objective world. Nothing must be taken for granted or assumed external of the lived experiences themselves as they are lived” (Moran, 2000: 127). Phenomenology is a rejection of the view that a theoretical, scientific, objective

perception of the world is our primary mode of experience. Instead, it draws our attention to the rich texture of subjective experience which provides the basis for any other type of understanding. To attempt to understand phenomena, we are required to notice our assumptions, how our view of the world “is always coloured by our cognitive, ethical, and aesthetic values” (Critchley, 2001: 115).

Is this phenomenological method possible to apply in psychotherapy? “The rule of suspended attention must be understood as an *ideal*” argue Laplanche and Pontalis (1988: 44, italics in original). Leclaire questions the irreconcilability of the positions of phenomenologist and theorist which psychoanalysis imposes upon the therapist, “the always recurring difficulty of psychoanalysis.... derives from the fact that is vulnerable, on the one hand, to the degradation of a closed systemisation and, on the other, to the anarchy of intuitive processes” (1998/1968: 16).

It is this transition between two - perhaps contradictory - requirements of psychotherapy that this literature review will now focus on. This is the transition between phenomenological, pre-theoretical, free-floating, evenly-suspended listening; and interpretation, which requires the therapist to select certain material from the client, material which may be selected for theoretical reasons.

Can the psychotherapist be truly phenomenological whilst still having 'frames of reference' through which to make interpretations? Can a psychotherapist ever fully “start from practice” (Loewenthal, 2011: 1), or is it just a case of bringing into a session “the most coherent, manageable and least anguished *Gestalt* that we have been able to attain” (Lomas, 1987: 40, italics in original)? Discussions of the 'analytic attitude' (Schafer, 1983;

Snell, 2013) suggest that there is no easy separation of theory and phenomenology from the outset of therapy.

For instance, Laplanche talks about emotionally succumbing to the client's speech. The therapist must be “violently moved by the foreign language” (1992: 201) of the patient. For Winnicott (1971) the analytic attitude of the psychotherapist might be, according to Snell, “the sustaining of a state of mind in the therapist in which mind is an open space available for the patient to move into, to come and inhabit and, crucially, shape as his own” (2013: 52). For Bion, it is perhaps the state of reverie considered previously (Symington & Symington, 1996). Casement talks about the development of an 'internal supervisor', a conception aimed at allowing the therapist to “remain a transitional or potential presence (like that of a mother who is non-intrusively present with her playing child)” (1985: 29). Bollas (2007) hints at the subtle difference between phenomenology and theory by advocating how theories can be used as means of perception by the therapist. Theory may be learned, but it must also be forgotten, to allow the analyst to catch the 'drift' of the patient's unconscious (Snell, 2013).

These descriptions of the analytic attitude capture some of the ways that psychotherapists attend to their patients. The attitude, or stance, frequently attempts to be relatively theory free, as it were, (albeit unconscious communications are considered vital), in that it attempts to privilege a phenomenological attitude with the therapist maintaining a state of evenly-suspended attention.

However, perhaps none of these analytic attitudes make as much effort to be phenomenological, and to start from a theory-free position as Loewenthal's (2011) 'post-

existentialism'. He describes it in the following way. "In working therapeutically, the psychological therapist may find that certain ideas/theories come to mind...This is regarded as very different to starting with such theories as a frame-up" (Loewenthal, 2011: 3). The difference appears to be in that theories are considered in terms of "implications, rather than applications" (2011: 3) they may have for a psychotherapy in which "the term "phenomenology" could be thought to come closest to what is being considered" (2011: 3).

Whilst this description may be regarded as quite persuasive, the question of when theory may assume importance is still pertinent. What is it that may cause theory to 'come to mind'? In other words, what affects the "tension between analyst as phenomenologist, and the analyst as theorist" (Snell, 2013: 63)? When does the analytic attitude give way to interpretation?

2.8 Interpretation

Rycroft defines interpretation as a "kind of communication they [analysts] make to their patients, namely statements in which they assert that what their patient has been telling them has wider implications than the patient has appreciated" (1985: 58). Interpretation is considered central to the psychoanalytic project, with Laplanche and Pontalis referring to it as "the heart of the Freudian doctrine and technique. Psychoanalysis itself might be defined in terms of it" (1988: 227). It is important to note that not all interpretations are ones that are based on theory. Lomas makes a distinction between "interpretation that places virtually exclusive reliance on a system of knowledge...and interpretation that is based on a heterogeneous mix that includes immediate intuitions, personal experiences

and cultural biases, as well as ideas derived from systems of thought” (1987: 41). The latter type of interpretation obviously includes theory, but does not exclusively rely on it. However, many interpretations do pertain to a system of knowledge, a theory. In psychoanalysis interpretations are typically based on unconscious mental processes including transference and defences (e.g., Rycroft, 1985).

The purpose of interpretation in psychotherapy is concerned with providing the patient with insight into themselves. Laplanche and Pontalis define it as a “procedure which, by means of analytic investigation, brings out the latent meaning in which the subject says and does” (1988: 227). The precise understanding of such interpretations has changed over time. Goldberg believed that interpretation was initially thought of as metaphor for a discharge of symptoms, “the abscess image”; to one that could help the patient's understanding of something: “the dialogical image” (1985: 62). To some extent this development mirrors the distinction between the scientific/explanatory and interpretivist/understanding views of theory presented earlier in the chapter.

This development is illustrated in that interpretations aim not only to be revelatory in terms of providing the client with an understanding of their unconscious wishes; but also to be the basis for a transformative experience. “The interpretation has effects that result in changes in the thing interpreted, making the original interpretation immediately out of date...The analyst gives an interpretation; the patient hears it and works on it, absorbing it and making it her or his own. In the process of so doing, the patient is changed” (Frosh, 1997: 121).

However interpretations work, what is being argued here is that interpretations represent a

more theoretically imbued feature of psychotherapy than free-floating attention, or 'the analytic attitudes' considered previously. Whilst this seems perhaps unimportant, the literature also reveals the use of psychoanalytic interpretation to be at times problematic, something which will now be discussed.

Interpretations as overly-theoretical

There have been criticisms of the traditional method of interpretation. “Hands off the theorisation of the patient! Hands off!” exclaimed Laplanche (1992: 70), in what he regarded as an allegiance to theory through interpretation as being an overly-authoritative aspect of psychotherapy. Lacan (1977) also warns against the therapist being the subject-supposed-to-know. Lomas encapsulates this sentiment through asserting that “both theory and practice have remained enthralled by the prestige of physical science, and analytic interpretation is such that the practitioner remains in danger of prejudging matters on the basis of his theories of unconscious mechanisms” (1987: 41).

The concept of interpretation itself has come under criticism from various quarters, such as its claims on truth (Spence, 1982); as the vehicle for a dogmatic assertion of theory (Lomas, 1987); or through a lack of appreciation for psychotherapy as essentially being an intersubjective enterprise (Menninger, 1958). “As a generation we are disenchanted with interpretations” concludes Friedman, (2002: 540). It is notable how interpretations can not only become heavily theorised but also may be criticised for this.

Interpretations as being made due to the psychotherapist's own anxiety

Whilst it has been considered above how interpretation aims to have an elucidative effect, psychotherapists may also use theory to interpret as a means of alleviating their own

anxiety. Britton and Steiner (1994) explain this with reference to the views of Bion (1962):

It should be the analyst's mind primed with its theories which awaits as a receptacle for its expectations to be fulfilled by experience of the patient. This requires a capacity to wait, and if the analyst is unable to tolerate the uncertainty of not understanding he may turn to his theory as a source of reassurance and look for a patient to act as a container for the theory. Bion emphasises that the analyst's pre-conception has to act as a container for the realisation, and 'NOT' the other way round (Britton & Steiner, 1994: 1075).

This point is pertinent to our understanding of when theory may increase in importance to a psychotherapist. Bion, according to Britton and Steiner (1994), shows how psychotherapists may turn to theory out of a desire to alleviate uncertainty and a lack of understanding. This idea, that theoretically based interpretations may act as kind of security blanket for psychotherapists is evident in other psychoanalytic literature. For instance, Pareja (1986) endorses an

approach that teaches the therapist to follow just where the patient leads in a manner that continually invites his further thoughts, leaving more open the possibility for discovery and surprise and teaching the therapist (and patient) to tolerate a greater degree of uncertainty, frustration, and confusion before dynamic hypotheses are offered.' (Pareja, 1986: 653).

For 'dynamic hypotheses' we may read interpretation. Ferro (2002) in his description of a 'saturated' interpretation – one filling up all possible meaning - is making a related point.

Carnochan says this sort of interpretation is “a product of the analyst's anxiety in the face of uncertainty, rather than a result of accurately decoding the “true” meaning of the patient's utterance” (2004: 21). Leaving aside 'truth' for the time being, what is relevant is that psychoanalytic interpretations may be made out of anxiety felt by the psychotherapist and not always simply to help achieve insight for the patient.

2.9 Alternatives to interpretation

What are the alternatives to a turn to theory as a desire to feel less anxious and more certain? Rustin (2001) writes of this type of situation in her practice. Rustin describes her "relationship to the theoretical ideas that underpin my clinical practice and my own deeper values” (2001: 274), but she also emphasises that at times she needed to “turn to my clinical imagination, to be willing to take risks and not to know the outcome in advance” (p274). Rustin does not want to theorise, stating that she does not regard her practice as “desirable techniques or any kind of recipe for anyone else” (p274). However, what she does want to advocate is the ability of the psychotherapist to resist premature interpretation and a turn to theory as means of alleviating a feeling of anxiety.

When all the established ways of going forward in a session seem useless, the response elicited from the therapist has a direct connection with the sense of blockage and the despair that this engenders. If we can manage not to side-step all this, we may be able to do something useful (Rustin, 2001: 74).

To not 'side-step' as Rustin puts it, appears to be to confront, or 'stay with'. Perhaps it is of something similar which Cotton and Loewenthal describe when talking about “the gap between the theory of treatment and the being or doing of treatment” (2011: 87). In this

“slippery liminal space” there is “an opportunity for valuable exploration, reflection and learning” (p87). This appears to be different to a “retreat behind entrenched psychologized theoretical positions” (p87).

Any attempt to describe this 'liminal space' too definitively is perhaps to miss the point. Cayne and Loewenthal (2011) argue, from a 'post-existential' perspective, that the anxiety felt by psychotherapists which may prevent them from occupying this space, as it were, could be thought of as a form of ontological insecurity (e.g., Laing, 1960). By this they mean a failure of the psychotherapist to be 'grounded' in “a centrally firm sense of his own and other people's reality and identity” (Laing, 1960: 39). Post-existentialism asks psychotherapists to:

firstly, engage with our own experience through the between, deferring the need for such theories; secondly, question whether the ideas that do occur to us are simply a return to theory as a familiar place needed in the face of our own anxiety or dread; and thirdly remain open to where the return to such formulations becomes a way of reconstituting more of the same rather than permitting difference (Loewenthal 2011: 13).

What the authors appear to be getting at is at least twofold. Firstly, they are asking psychotherapists to attend to the distinction between the personal and the theoretical. Does theory prevent us from engaging fully with our own experience? Sontag is of this view. “Those who reach for a Freudian interpretation are only expressing the lack of response to what is on the screen” (1961: 10). Secondly, they appear to be questioning how much psychotherapists may be in the business of trying to know and understand the other through assimilating them into their own preconceived ideas, be they theoretical or

otherwise. Ultimately, the point here is again about permitting difference, privileging the unknown. Understanding may be over-estimated in its importance, and, rather than being sought after, must emerge on its own terms.

Concluding comments

This literature review first considered how theory is conventionally understood in psychotherapy. Is it viewed as representing some aspect of an objectively verifiable reality through explaining a 'truth'; or is it viewed more as an interpretive framework; as something which aids understanding? The question of how important theory is to psychotherapists was then considered through identifying relevant literature. Aspects of psychotherapy which suggest that theory is very important to it, such as the discourse employed by psychotherapists, the literature in the field, and the medical and scientific paradigms in which it may be situated were discussed and explored. However, other aspects of psychotherapy which appear less obviously theorised were also considered, such as not knowing, original thought, and ethics. The implications of Wittgenstein's later work were then considered, and it was argued that his thoughts on how we learn and use language present a challenge for giving theory a prominent role in psychotherapy.

The literature review then considered when psychotherapists may turn to theory and under what circumstances might theory become more important to them. This question was approached through exploring the transition between evenly suspended attention and what was argued to be a more theorised aspect of psychotherapeutic practice: interpretation. It was suggested that, apart from helping their patients achieve greater insight, one reason why psychotherapists may interpret was due to their own anxiety of the uncertainty created in the psychotherapeutic setting.

This literature review will now be followed by a focus on the methodological issues that surround the operationalisation of the research question. What is the best way of investigating what psychotherapists may say about the importance, if any, of theory, in their work with clients?

Chapter 3 Methodology

Methodology refers to “the study of the direction and implications of empirical research, or of the suitability of the techniques employed in it” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989: 693). Perhaps more straightforwardly, methodology may be understood as pertaining to “the processes, techniques, or approaches employed in the solution of a problem or in doing something” (Gove, 2002: 1423). This chapter will therefore be concerned with issues surrounding the selection of an appropriate method to research what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients.

Research typically involves the use of a method, but an immediate problem appears to present itself due to the similarity between the concepts of 'method' and 'theory' (see definition in chapter two). How might the use of a method, which involves procedure and so may be considered theoretically imbued, affect the gathering of data pertaining to the importance, or otherwise of theory? Is the enterprise fundamentally flawed from the outset in that it employs a theory to investigate the very same thing?

Whilst this question has no simple answer, and will be returned to throughout this chapter, it is suggested that the one way in which the researcher can attempt to minimise the effects of theory being used to research theory, is to consider phenomenology (e.g. Husserl, 1960), in this discussion of methodology. Therefore, the following two ideas are considered important in informing the ensuing discussion.

The emergence of meanings

An aim for the research in general is to open up new ways of understanding the

relationships that psychotherapists have to theory. In order to do this, it is important to conduct the research in such a way that does not unintentionally limit participants' responses, and to so use a method which, insofar as possible, is sensitive, and open, to all possible meanings.

The idea of *possibility* is considered important here, as it pertains to what is unknown. This may be argued as being important in making the asking of a research question a meaningful activity, as opposed to asking a question in which the answer is, in all likelihood, already known. “Unlike probability, with its concern with the predictability of the already known, possibility will be shown to be concerned with the unexpected, and what was previously unknown” (Cayne & Loewenthal, 2011: 46). This notion is considered important when asking psychotherapists about theory, as theory may be considered as synonymous with what is known, or as what can be known. If this assertion is accepted, then correspondingly, what is not, or is less theoretically imbued, may be defined by that which is not known (a sentiment which is perhaps consistent with Bion's [1962] *not-knowing* being regarded as a less theoretically imbued feature of psychotherapy).

Therefore, it is considered important for the research to keep in mind this idea of possibility, a notion which is considered inherently phenomenological and which attempts to keep the research open, as much as it can, to the emergence of all possible meanings.

Intersubjectivity

A further idea that informs this discussion - and which again may be regarded as phenomenologically grounded - is that of the method having a relationally informed

understanding of the research process. It is felt by the researcher that the method chosen must have an understanding that the knowledge produced by the research may be defined as “that which emerges between researcher and researched” (Loewenthal, 2007: 2). This viewpoint is considered appropriate for the present research in that it reflects the importance given to the relationship between psychotherapist and patient in psychotherapy, (which may include features of psychotherapy which are less heavily theorized) and recognizes the researcher as an active participant in the research process.

The importance of opening up possible meanings, and appreciating the importance of intersubjectivity, will inform the forthcoming consideration of the methodological complexities which exist when deciding how best to implement the research question. These two values will help in the choice between a qualitative and quantitative paradigm for the research. They will also play a role when considering issues of researching what participants *say*. For instance, how will the method chosen best appreciate the full complexity of verbal responses from participants, including being sensitive to those which may deviate from convention? The role of language, and its relationship to meaning and experience will be considered. Issues considering how to research *theory* will also be discussed. As mentioned previously, of importance here is how the paradox of using a method which is founded on certain theoretical principles to investigate psychotherapists' relationships to theory may be best resolved.

These methodological considerations will be critically examined in reference to the epistemological and ontological positions they adhere to. In other words, the question of which method is most appropriate for investigating the research question (methodology), will be considered in relation to both the understanding of the nature of the knowledge

produced by using such a method (epistemology), and the views such a method has of human existence and the nature of reality (ontology).

Informing all of these considerations is an appreciation of the ethical context in which this research will take place. An appreciation of the importance of intersubjectivity and the relationship between researcher and researched means that ethical issues must also be considered in relation to methodology.

Different research methods will then be considered, with their benefits and drawbacks predicated on the preceding discussion. The method which appears to be most apposite to the methodological considerations will then be identified and further discussed.

3.1 Situating the research in a qualitative paradigm

The aim of the research: to explore what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients, is felt by the researcher to suit a qualitative paradigm as opposed to a quantitative one. This is due to a qualitative paradigm having greater consideration of the two criteria detailed previously: being as open as possible to all, including new meanings, and in understanding research to be an intersubjective process.

Quantitative methods, as the name suggests, are primarily concerned with assigning numerical values to responses to a particular stimulus. These methods - generally employed by those working in the 'natural' sciences - involve the experimenter manipulating an independent variable to test its effect upon a dependent variable. The cause-and-effect nature of quantitative methods makes them the methods upon which the

scientific-empirical tradition rests, and means that they are concerned with the “establishment of abstract 'if-then' statements about the world, which seek to explain how observable phenomena are the result of specific causal factors and processes” (McLeod, 2011: 2).

Qualitative methods, on the other hand, aim to “*develop an understanding of how the social world is constructed*” (McLeod, 2011: 3, italics in original). This 'construction' of the social world (e.g, Gergen, 1999), refers to how humans (including researchers) actively make sense of the world in a way that is uniquely human. Meanings are not attributed to things in *a priori* fashion. The individual is seen in a historicist context. Societal and cultural factors influence the way she engages with the world. McLeod's (2011) definition also recognises that the aim of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of phenomena rather than provide an explanation of causal relationships between abstract concepts. Qualitative methods are not used to “test or confirm existing theories, but to push the horizon of understanding a little further by pursuing open-ended questions, and following the data wherever they lead” (McLeod, 2011: 10), and to “realise new insights” (Kvale, 1996: 100). Methods with aims of this sort appear more relevant for research questioning the importance of theory to psychotherapists.

These two approaches to methodology reflect opposing views on ontology and epistemology. Critchley understands this dichotomy as one which runs deep. For him, the difference corresponds to that between analytic and continental philosophy, and “scientific explanation versus humanistic interpretation, empirical-scientific-Benthamite-Carnapian versus hermeneutic-romantic-Coleridgean-Heideggarian” (2001: 126). The epistemological and ontological positions of these two research traditions will now be

further considered.

The epistemology and ontology of quantitative methods

The ontological position of quantitative methods assumes that our existence may be studied empirically. That is, almost any understanding of our lives may be judged as either “true or false in a virtue of a reality existing independently of us” (Dummett, 1978: 146). This appears to be the foundation from which quantitative approaches begin; that there is a reality 'out there' waiting to be discovered. As such, they subscribe to a view that there is a determinacy of meaning, a 'truth' (e.g., Honderich, 1996), which may be found through the appropriate instruments of inquiry.

Whilst such a viewpoint appears appropriate to investigating, say, the geological structure of Mars, it seems less suited to the present research question. What would the reality be about what psychotherapists say about the importance of theory, if any, to their work with clients? Such a question appears nonsensical, as the research question is asking what psychotherapists *say*. That is the focus of the investigation, and not an attempt to form a consensus, or a reality, about the actual importance of theory to psychotherapists. That may be considered a valid research question, but is not the present one. Aside from this, it is also worth mentioning that having a positivist and realist ontology denies the possibility of reality being co-constructed through the researcher and researched, and so does not seem appropriate for research which places this value on intersubjectivity.

Quantitative approaches generally also adhere to a realist or positivist epistemology. They take the viewpoint that knowledge can be produced and described in a context-independent fashion. Proponents of such an epistemology “assume that it is possible to

describe the physical and social world scientifically so that, for example, multiple observers can agree on what they see” (National Research Council, 2002: 25).

To take such a position on epistemology in the present study again appears to require an attempt to form some sort of consensus on how important theory is to psychotherapists, or in what way theory is important to them. This would allow the formulation of abstractions to be made on the importance of theory to psychotherapists. Whilst this may be valuable in certain instances it is not the same as the present research question which is investigating what psychotherapists *say* about the importance of theory to them.

More generally, the epistemological perspective of quantitative methods mean that they appear more likely to limit rather than open up possibilities of participants' responses through attempting to measure and quantify, and so do not meet the first of the criteria outlined above. Similarly, to describe the world in a “context-independent fashion” (National Research Council, 2002: 25), appears in opposition to the intersubjective and relational values proposed earlier; values, which if adhered to, would necessitate the context of the research encounter being given importance.

The epistemology and ontology of qualitative methods

Qualitative approaches generally adhere to interpretivist; relativist; social constructionist; and subjectivist, epistemological and ontological positions. They reject a realist or objectivist epistemology, which posit the existence of a world *independent* of the researcher which may be known through using appropriate instruments of inquiry. Instead, qualitative methods occupy epistemological and ontological positions which Crotty describes as suggesting that “there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it, truth

or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (1998: 8). McLeod also emphasises the constructionist underpinnings of qualitative inquiry through stating “the products of research are not 'facts' or 'findings' that reflect an objective reality, but are versions of the life world that are co-constructed between researcher and participants” (2003: 73). Both quotes show how intersubjectivity is prized in such a view of knowledge and reality.

Qualitative research is always, to some extent a hermeneutic enterprise (McLeod, 2011), in that it employs an interpretation made by the researcher as “an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study” (Taylor, 1971: 3). The interpretivist epistemology that plays a crucial role in qualitative research methods is in opposition to the positivist epistemology which is often associated with quantitative inquiry. “The interpretation goes beyond the immediately given and enriches the understanding by bringing forth new differentiations and interrelationships in the text, extending its meaning” (Kvale, 1996: 50). Key in the idea of the hermeneutic circle is that of the text and the researcher being changed through an ongoing process. Understanding is always provisional, and subject to further interpretation. No epistemological claim can be considered final as knowledge is always under construction.

The phenomenological basis of qualitative research also informs its epistemological and ontological positions. Qualitative research, when considered phenomenological as conceived by Husserl (1960), attempts to access the essence of an object or experience, through the willingness of the researcher to “transcend one's pre-existing ideas about the phenomenon being investigated to achieve a deeper level of understanding” (McLeod, 2011: 26). Phenomenology may be understood as providing an understanding of what

qualitative research may aim for, as “phenomenologists attempt to arrive at increasingly adequate (although never complete or final) conclusions concerning our experience of the world” (Spinelli, 2005: 32).

From this discussion on the ontological and epistemological aspects of quantitative and qualitative methodologies it is clear to the researcher that the research should be grounded in the qualitative paradigm. The use of such a paradigm allows for the opening up of new possibilities and “can serve to issue knowledge about neglected, but significant areas of the human realm” (Polkinghorne, 2007: 472), as well as allowing a relational or dialogical (e.g., Frank, 2005) intersubjective form of inquiry which examines “that which emerges between researcher and researched” (Loewenthal, 2007: 4).

3.2 Researching what psychotherapists say

With it being apparent that the present research should be situated in the qualitative paradigm the discussion will now turn to the specific issue of researching what participants *say*. What views of language and meaning are – perhaps unthinkingly - subscribed to, when researching what participants say? How might what participants say be researched in a manner that both allows for an openness to the emergence of different meanings, and also takes into account the role of the researcher?

The saying and the said

Instead of researching 'what psychotherapists say' the researcher will, in all likelihood, be researching what psychotherapists have previously *said*: participants' words are likely to be recorded, regardless of which particular research method is employed. The point here is

that there will be a difference between the experience of the researcher in hearing and responding to what participants are saying when with them, compared to a subsequent retrospective analysis of what they have said. Levinas's (1981) thoughts on, what he termed, *the saying and the said* are of relevance here. The 'saying' appears to refer to the ethics as 'first philosophy' that Levinas proposed. "Saying is what makes the self-exposure of sincerity possible; it is a way of giving everything, of not keeping anything for oneself" (Levinas, 1981: 64). The saying refers to the language used by one who is responding to the other ethically simply by virtue of their existence. It has, for Levinas, similarities to the state of innocence synonymous with childhood. "The child is a pure exposure of expression in so far as it is pure vulnerability; it has not yet learned to dissemble, to deceive, to be insincere" (1981: 64).

The said, on the other hand, appears to pertain to the content of language, and so refers less to the experience of language used in the intersubjective encounter between individuals, and instead more to an abstracted and decontextualised form of that language. "Language as *saying* is an ethical openness to the other; as that which is *said* - reduced to a fixed identity or synchronized presence – is an ontological closure to the other" (Levinas, 1981: 65).

Levinas appears to be saying that something gets lost when language is treated as abstract and taken out of its initial context, and in this sense we may note similarities with his view to that of Wittgenstein (1958) considered in the previous chapter. However, for Levinas, the focus of his thought, and the foundation of human activity, is the ethical relationship. If this is to be valued, then the research must try to recapture the original context of the speech, rather than treat language, and therefore, the subject as disembodied, and merely a

product of their socio-historical context. When the initial context of the language is given precedence, the ethical is also valued, and in doing so grounds the research firmly in a relational and intersubjective context.

To retain an openness to the emergence of meaning in the research, what is said by participants must not be privileged at the expense of an appreciation of the intersubjective encounter which constitutes the research (interview) process. Levinas (1981) implies that the words of participants themselves should not be idolised and taken out of context; the manner in which they're spoken should also be of importance. It may also be asserted, in the light of the analysis of Wittgenstein's (1958) thought, that to allow for the possibility of something other than the potentially dominant language-game of theory being made evident; an effort to keep the original spirit of the language intact, insofar as possible, will allow for a full range of possible meanings to be constructed.

What cannot be said

In attempting to be sensitive to different possibilities of meaning emerging in the research, it appears important to consider the issue of what participants may be unable to say, and to explore what may be done to avoid any unwillingly contribution on the researcher's part towards participants being unable to provide a full range of responses. This point will be explored through initially considering the idea of 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1966); and then through the psychoanalytically informed notion of the 'defended subject' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

Polanyi believed that 'tacit knowledge' was the basis for all other forms of knowledge. This view is illustrated in his description of a scientist 'knowing' that they are approaching

a discovery:

To hold such knowledge is an act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is not trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it. His act of knowing exercises a personal judgement in relating evidence to an external reality, an aspect of which he is seeking to apprehend (Polanyi, 1966: 25).

Polanyi is emphasizing the role of tacit knowledge as the basis for other knowledge. Put simply his idea is that “one can know more than one can tell” (Polanyi, 1966: 8). This idea clearly has implications for researching what psychotherapists say about theory, for by Polanyi's reckoning, what they say will only encompass part of what they know. The method employed by the researcher should bear this in mind.

It appears likely that it is the more theoretically-imbued features of psychotherapy, and not the less procedural and less thoroughly explicated - which were argued earlier as being less theoretically-imbued - features of psychotherapy, which may be spoken of by participants more easily. It is also inevitable that participants may more easily speak of theoretical knowledge than tacit knowledge. Tacit knowing is associated with knowing-how, rather than knowing-what (Polanyi, 1966), and so shares connotations with a practice, an activity. Tacit knowing cannot, by definition, be made explicit. However, whilst it may be impossible to use a method which researches what cannot be said, what is more achievable is to use a method which does not only take on face value the words

spoken by participants, but also, perhaps, attempts to infer what aspects of psychotherapeutic practice they are unable to talk about.

Hollway and Jefferson's (2008) notion of the 'defended subject' also relates to this subject. The authors take contention with what they regard as the typical starting point of qualitative research; that the participant is able to access and describe her experience for the benefits of others. The authors, using Klein's (1952) theory of object relations as a basis, argue that unconscious defences formed as a result of the subject's anxiety have a "significant influence on people's actions, lives, and relations" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008: 299). The acknowledgement of a dynamic unconscious which represses anxious memories obviously has ramifications for a research interview.

It means that if memories of events are too anxiety-provoking, they will be either forgotten or recalled in a modified, more acceptable fashion. Defences will affect the meanings that are available in a particular context and how they are conveyed to the listener (who is also a defended subject) (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008: 299).

This is felt to be important when researching what participants may say about theory in their work with clients. Is it possible that certain responses will unconsciously be considered impermissible due to participants' anxieties? Hollway and Jefferson's defended subject unconsciously limits their responses as a function of their anxiety. Remaining open requires an ability to confront one's anxiety.

How might the research method employed by the researcher minimise the censorship of the defended subject? Hollway and Jefferson (2008) suggest an approach rooted in Freud's method of free association, which through attending to contradictions and incoherences in

the participants' responses, “assumes that unconscious connections will be revealed” (2008: 615). Whilst such an approach does not seem appropriate for investigating the present research question – using an approach grounded in psychoanalytic theory to question the importance of theory in psychotherapy appears paradoxical, and in potential conflict with the importance of phenomenology discussed earlier – the issues raised by the authors are relevant and important. The idea of the defended subject means that not only should the researcher attempt to minimise anxiety experienced by participants to ensure more complete responses, but that inevitably, as in the case of tacit knowledge, participants will not, and cannot, say everything they 'know'. The epistemological and ontological basis of the method used by the researcher must reflect this understanding. It is also worth applying the idea of the defended subject to the researcher. What might the ‘defended researcher’ be unconsciously communicating which may affect the range of participants' responses? A research method, and a reflexive approach which attempts to make the role of the researcher transparent appears apposite.

What is said and what is meant

Hollway and Jefferson's (2008) suggestion of a method sympathetic to the notion of a 'split' human subject arguably shares similarities to a postmodern understanding of the 'shattered' subject. This notion refers to a view of the human subject as one who may be unwilling or unable to reveal their experiences through the language they use. As Loewenthal puts it, “the postmodern challenged the modern narrative: those we research as tellers of stories would have us believe that as narrators, they tell us what is real as it happens” (2007: 222).

Indeed, when researching what psychotherapists say about theory, it is important to

consider the nature of the relationship between what is said and what is meant. How might our understanding of the role of language affect any epistemological claims the research may have, and what implications does this have for the research method?

The view of language shown in the analysis of Wittgenstein (1958) in chapter two, suggests that the researcher cannot simply treat the words of research participants as reflecting and representing their inner experience. The constellation of thought and understanding that constitutes postmodernism is also important in this debate. Loewenthal (2007) sums up the researcher's predicament in the light of such an understanding of human subjectivity:

Respondents operate like movie directors: they are editing, have biases, can toe the party line, etc. Thus there are histories and not history – it is also more problematic for us to see our jobs as relational researchers as just facilitating the researched to tell a story, as if it was the story with our respondent centre stage and most probably subject to little (Loewenthal, 2007: 222).

Whilst psychoanalysis may make us aware of being subject to the dynamic unconscious, it is the 'turn to language' associated with postmodernism and post-structuralism which has done much to challenge the modernist idea of a more straightforward correspondence between language and meaning.

Saussure (1966/1916) was among the first to make evident the structural relationship between signifier (the sound image) and signified (the concept) being the basis of a linguistic sign. This sign is considered arbitrary in the sense that it is produced by cultural convention and not by necessity. Language, therefore is not a naming process. “The

linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image” (Sausserre, 1966/1916, in Loewenthal & Snell, 2003: 67). This instability in language became one of the hallmarks of post-structuralist thought; that there is no fixed association between signifier and signified, as explained in reference to the views of Derrida:

[Derrida] argues that when we read a sign, meaning is not immediately clear to us. Signs refer to what is absent, so in a sense meanings are absent too. Meaning is continually moving along on a chain of signifiers, and we cannot be precise about its exact 'location', because it is never tied to one particular sign (Sarup, 1993: 33).

The implications for this post-structuralist thought in relation to researching what psychotherapists say are manifold. For instance, there should be no assumptions that what one participant refers to as 'theory' will be what another means by 'theory'. Indeed, the meaning of the word 'theory' may differ in the same participant's report. “Meaning will never quite stay the same from context to context; the signified will be altered by the various chains of signifiers in which it is entangled” (Sarup, 1993: 34). Again the links to Wittgenstein (1958) are apparent. The research method used must attempt to try to disentangle the signified, theory, to make sense of it through attending to its context. Ultimately, as meaning fluctuates it follows that the knowledge produced in the present research cannot be grounded in epistemological certainty. Eagleton (1983) summarises this post-structuralist understanding of language and meaning.

It is an illusion for me to believe that I can ever be fully present in what I say or write, because to use signs at all entails my meaning being always somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself. Not only my meaning, indeed, but I myself: since language is something I am made out of, rather than a convenient tool I use, the

whole idea that I am a stable, unified entity must also be a fiction (Eagleton, 1983: 130).

A similar view of language - that signifier leads to signifier and not to signified - is also key in the work of Lacan (1977), who emphasised our lack of agency in relation to language. For Lacan, we are subject to language (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003), and to the signifier (which only signifies another signifier), and which is structured like the unconscious. Theory, and what it may signify, will therefore forever be evasive as “there is no veiled signified-in-waiting that will eventually call the crazy procession of signifiers to order” (Bowie, 1991: 71-72). To research then, what psychotherapists say about the importance of theory, cannot be an attempt to extract some deeper meaning about *how important theory actually is to them*, as it is impossible to simply proceed from signifier to signified.

For Lacan, it is language that speaks the subject rather than *vice versa*. In these terms, theory may be regarded as the dominant discourse (see chapter two) which constitutes the subject-as-psychotherapist. This leads to a question of how the research method might allow for the participant to also operate within a more marginalised discourse. Might they need to step outside their roles and identities as psychotherapists to allow for this to emerge? How might a method allow for this possibility? What may be suggested in the light of this realisation is that the method chosen must take into account issues of identity, role, and culture; to consider the institutions which may affect the participants' words.

Understanding what is said

A qualitative method which attempts to research what participants say must also take a position in relation to hermeneutics. Ricoeur (1981: 43) defines hermeneutics as “the

theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts”. Hermeneutics is not simply imposing a set of judgements on the words of the researched; what is known as the hermeneutic circle describes the relationship between the text (or the participant), and the researcher, with the two being constantly altered through an ongoing process. Understanding is always provisional, and subject to further interpretation. The idea of the hermeneutic circle means that no epistemological claim can be considered final, and confers a relational basis on the construction of any knowledge produced in such an endeavour.

Heidegger's (1963/1927) fusion of hermeneutic interpretation and phenomenology is relevant here. For Heidegger, a fundamental aspect of *Dasein* is its interpretive activity (Dreyfus, 1991). The centrality of our interpretative nature has implications for the work of the researcher in making sense of the participants' words, as “an interpretation is never a pre-suppositionless apprehending of something presented to us” (Heidegger, 1963/1927: 192). We are always coming from somewhere, as it were, and any interpretation of what participants say will be influenced by the researcher's preconceptions on the subject. However, Heidegger was also attempting to elucidate the structures of any human inquiry and therefore the process of research methodology in general:

Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought...

Any inquiry, as an inquiry about something, has that which is asked about. But all inquiry about something is somehow a questioning of something. So in addition to what is asked about, an inquiry has that which is interrogated... Furthermore, in what is asked about there lies also that which is to be found out by the asking (Heidegger, 1963/1927, in Rée, 2000: 356).

Heidegger appears to be saying that whenever we ask a question about something we are always asking a question about some aspect of our being, and doing so *as* that being. As Rée puts it, “whenever we orientate ourselves in the world and make some sense of it, or fail to do so, we stand in some relation to the question of the meaning of being: our asking of it is coextensive with our existence” (2000: 357).

Heidegger’s focus on the nature of our existence proposes that any questions about epistemology are secondary to, and predicated upon, our ontology. “*Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological*” (Heidegger, 1963/1927: 32, italics in Friedman, 1964). Ricoeur is of this opinion. “The presupposition of hermeneutics construed as epistemology is precisely what Heidegger and Gadamer place in question.... rather it must be seen as an attempt to dig beneath the epistemological enterprise itself, in order to uncover its properly ontological conditions” (1981: 53). It appears to be the particular project of Heidegger to show that ontology precedes epistemology.

This understanding of ontology and hermeneutics reveal a researcher whose interpretive capacity certainly cannot be relied upon to be objective, and who is susceptible to various forces. For instance, the researcher has 'historical consciousness' (Gadamer, 1975) in that the researcher is understood as being culturally embedded. “Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event or a tradition” (Gadamer, 1975: 245, in McLeod, 2011: 29). This view of the historically situated individual means that any epistemological claims the researcher may make are bound by cultural and historical means of understanding. We cannot escape these limitations, step outside our culture: “the self-reflection of the individual is only a flicker in the closed circuits of historical life” (Gadamer, 1975: 245, in McLeod, 2011: 29).

Hermeneutics appears to challenge the researcher and the research method to make these cultural, societal, and historical traditions as conscious as possible, both when considering participants' accounts, and in relation to the researcher's interpretations of these accounts, whilst also conferring an understanding of the human subject that full transparency and self-understanding will always remain unattainable.

3.3 Researching theory

McLeod (2003) provides a "working definition" of research as being "a systematic process of critical inquiry leading to valid propositions and conclusions that are communicated to interested others" (p4). In McLeod's definition it appears that the difference between the asking of a question, and the asking of a *research question*, is that the latter is explored in the spirit of critical inquiry. What makes the inquiry critical, as it were, is the application of a "systematic process"; the method in other words. Application of this method produces knowledge. "Any investigation takes place within a theoretical system of concepts or constructs... research involves the application of a set of methods or principles, the purpose of which is to achieve knowledge that is as valid and truthful as possible" (McLeod, 2003: 4).

McLeod's definition reintroduces an important point in this chapter. The systematic process which defines critical inquiry entails a procedure that takes place within a 'theoretical system'. What might the use of such theoretical procedure mean for an inquiry into psychotherapists' relationships with theory? How might the theory embedded in the method of the research affect its findings? This is a potential problem. The researcher

wants to inquire about what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients. The researcher does not want to assume theory to be important to them, and so correspondingly does not want to inquire about theory from a certain theoretical position which may in turn privilege certain aspects of psychotherapy over others. Earlier in the chapter, the ideas of being open to possible meanings, and an appreciation of the intersubjective nature of research, were presented as important in militating against the effects of theory within the research method influencing the findings. These may both be described as broadly phenomenological, which, along with 'post-existentialism', may be regarded as potentially helpful in considering this issue.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, when considered as a method, contains an understanding of what research into theory may ideally entail, in that when it requires a willingness to abandon “as far as possible, the plethora of interpretational layers added to the unknown stimuli to our experience in order to arrive at a more adequate, if still approximate and incomplete, knowledge of 'the things themselves'” (Spinelli, 2005: 19, quotation marks in original).

Whilst the phenomenological method is noble in its aim, how effective is such a process likely to be? And is the version of phenomenology which is appropriated by conventional qualitative research methods, such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) ever fully free of theoretical preconceptions? There appears no easy blend between 'pure' phenomenology and research. Loewenthal opines that “‘phenomenological' research attempts to show it is scientific, yet if it stuck to Husserl's (1960) intentions then the word 'research' would be redundant and notions of meaning units and so on... could be seen as psychologisms that technologise thinking, preventing the phenomenological to emerge”

(2007: 225).

Whilst the researcher should make every attempt to firstly, minimise the theoretical influence of the research method used, and secondly, to be aware of the theoretical nature of the chosen research method, it appears impossible to fully escape the theory inherent in any research method. The difficulty of researching theory in psychotherapy through a systematic process of a research method, which to a greater or lesser extent has its own theoretical basis, is in many ways, analogous to any investigation into any form of cultural practice by a researcher embedded within the same cultural practice. As mentioned previously, Heidegger (1927/1963) explains how it is in our nature to attempt to understand ourselves, yet any such understanding is inherently limited and shaped as it is by who are doing the asking. This point is expanded upon by Rée (2000):

Our 'thrownness' – the movement which has always landed us, willy-nilly, in some mood that we cannot fully comprehend – is countered by a movement in which we throw ourselves outwards, becoming more than we already are as we attempt to understand the world. Every understanding is projected from a mood we have been thrown into, and every mood throws out an understanding that it projects into the world: we exist, essentially, as 'thrown projection' (Rée, 2000: 372).

It is this state of 'thrown projection' which is considered analogous to researching theory using a method which uses theory itself. Theory cannot be left out of method, and it is method which must be used to investigate theory. As Denzin and Lincoln state, “every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act” (2000: 18). What appears important is to thoroughly consider the theoretical implications of different

research methods - the epistemological and ontological lenses through which they perceive the world - as well as being personally reflexive. “What is decisive, is not to come out of the circle but to come into it the right way” (Heidegger, 1963/1927, in Rée. 2000: 372).

Post-existentialism

Post-existentialism (Loewenthal, 2011) is also deemed important when considering how best to research theory, and to minimise the impact of the theoretical basis of methods encroaching upon the phenomenological nature of the research. Applied to research, post-existentialism aims to put the researched first (as opposed to the researcher, and their theories). There is not a method or procedure for achieving this. “For the researcher to put the researched first is a complex notion: it does not mean doing what the researched wants, or denying the researcher's desire, as both would not necessarily be putting the other first” (Loewenthal, 2011: 167).

Therefore, to minimise the effects of theory embedded within the research method on the findings, attempts should be made by the researcher to be ethical, in privileging the other (the researched) over anything else. Loewenthal argues that to be truly ethical in our approach to research “we should be more concerned with justice on a case by case basis – for real justice cannot be appropriated or territorialized – the researcher has to be just in the moment with another” (2011: 174). The implications of post-existentialism for the research extend beyond the choice of research method. Rather, post-existentialism asks the researcher to conduct his research in the spirit of ethical duty to the other, something which should take precedence over any other motivations. However, the research method chosen by the researcher and his employment of it must also somehow reflect this spirit as

much as possible.

3.4 Research methods

The preceding discussion on methodological considerations for researching what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients has thrown up a number of issues. A broadly phenomenological approach was thought by the researcher to be important in asking such a research question, and so two concepts were presented as being essential criteria for the research method. These were, firstly, being as open as possible to different meanings emerging; and secondly, situating the research in a relationally informed paradigm, in that the researcher is understood as being a vital part of an essentially intersubjective process. This initially led to a decision, based on epistemological and ontological considerations, that qualitative, rather than quantitative research methods were best suited to the aims of the study. Issues regarding how to research what participants *say* were then considered, in light of the discussion on Wittgenstein (1958) in chapter two. It was deemed important to consider that solely focusing on what is said by participants fails to take into account the relationally informed ethical context in which these words were spoken. The understanding that participants will not be able to speak of everything, either due to certain experiences being the realm of 'tacit', practice-based knowing, or due to unconscious defences pertaining to anxiety was also explored, as were these same effects on the researcher. Post-structural understandings of language and meaning were also discussed, with an understanding of theory as a potentially dominant discourse felt to be especially important. Hermeneutic philosophy was also considered, with it offering an insight into the inherent limitations of interpreting the meaning of what participants may say. Lastly, the problem of using a theoretically

informed method to investigate theory was explored. The consideration of a 'non-technological' phenomenology, and a post-existential approach were presented as ideas which may help to lessen adverse theoretical effects on the research process.

With these considerations in mind, an appropriate method was selected by the researcher. The particular method was selected after considering a variety of different research methods. Some of these research methods will now be discussed.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is considered by many as most 'eminent' qualitative research method (McLeod, 2011). Originating from the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), and further developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory aims, as its name suggests, to provide a theory, 'grounded' in the data itself, to explain the phenomenon under investigation. Grounded theory thus analyses data in such a way that the researcher needs to be able to see emergent meanings in the data itself, rather than imposing them through their own personal and theoretical biases:

The goal of the analyst is to generate an emergent set of categories and their properties. ... To achieve this goal the analyst begins with open coding, which is coding the data in every way possible. Another way to phrase it is 'running the data open'. The analyst codes for as many categories as might fit; he codes different incidences into as many categories as possible.... He may even code for what is not obviously stated. ... The... rule is to analyze data line by line, constantly coding each sentence... As the analyst gets deep into the data, he discovers that all data can be subsumed as an indicator of some category in the analysis... a total saturation occurs: all data fit. (Glaser, 1978: 56-60, taken from McLeod, 2011: 119, italics in

Glaser,1978).

Glaser is advocating an approach in which the researcher must immerse themselves in the data (or text) produced by the research method, and through this immersion, the meaning(s), in the form of categories, of the data begin to emerge. These categories may be refined and developed until all data fits within them. These categories are then checked and re-checked by the researcher, with the aim always being to see whether the data produced could be interpreted differently, and therefore produce alternative categories. The categories produced in such an analysis are then sorted out in a hierarchical fashion. What are known as main categories may be shown to encompass many other categories, and their emergence provides the basis for the creation of a theory.

There are facets of grounded theory which are felt by the researcher to be well suited to the research question. A process of inductive theory building, in which meanings emerge from the data, appears to bear similarities to the phenomenological idea of bracketing, and fits with the requirement of the researcher of being a method which is sensitive to the possibility of new meanings emerging. It could be argued that grounded theory is able to do this because of its non-theoretical basis, which also helps it to elude a potentially problematic issue considered earlier: the theoretical principles embedded within a research method. Grounded theory demands the researcher to not impose their own theories on the research. As McLeod puts it, “it is difficult to conduct a grounded theory study if you are already an adherent of a 'strong' theory such as psychoanalysis – all that will 'emerge' from the grounded theory analysis will be psychoanalytic categories” (2011: 143). Grounded theory's lack of ideology or theoretical position means that in many ways it is suited to researching the importance of theory. The openness it has to the data appears suggestive of

a capacity to be sensitive to different meanings.

However, there are aspects of grounded theory which lead the researcher to ultimately consider it inappropriate for the present study. Firstly, whilst it attempts to start from a non-theoretical position, which is argued above as advantageous, grounded theory is, however, concerned with the production of theory, and so may be regarded as empiricist in its nature (Charmaz, 2000). Does the research aim to provide a theory about what psychotherapists say about the importance of theory in their work with clients? Such an aim would appear misguided. In exploring the value and importance of features of psychotherapy which appear less theoretically-imbued, it would appear odd and paradoxical to want to provide a theory about them.

Secondly, grounded theory appears not to be in accordance with the focus on intersubjectivity thought to be important in such an inquiry. The researcher's role is considered in terms of their immersion into the data, but perhaps not in terms of how they may make their initial codings, and about their experience of conducting such an analysis. Indeed, grounded theory may be considered a qualitative method which bears most similarities to epistemological positions commonly found in quantitative methods. Charmaz states that “Glaser's... position often comes close to traditional positivism, with its assumptions of an objective, external reality, a neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems, and objectivist rendering of data” (2000: 510). It is grounded theory's tendency to view the researcher as a neutral observer which is considered problematic, as it doesn't attend enough to what the researcher brings to the research, something which McLeod (2011) considers in relation to category labels:

In grounded theory work, it can be risky to think too much about the tradition or intellectual community within which one operates because to do so would result in a necessity or desire to understand the historical provenance of the category labels that were arising in and through analysis (McLeod, 2011: 143).

The relational and hermeneutic aspects of qualitative inquiry may be argued as not being adequately accounted for. Therefore, perhaps grounded theory may be regarded as lacking some qualities associated with an ethical inquiry. For these reasons, grounded theory was ultimately considered an unsatisfactory means for implementing the research question.

Heuristics

Heuristics, developed by the work of Moustakas (1990a), is a research method which explicitly acknowledges the role of the researcher. “The passionate involvement of the researcher will enable a depth of sustained examination of a topic that will go beyond what could be achieved through mere use of the methods of inquiry associated with phenomenology” (McLeod, 2011: 206). The difference between phenomenology, as commonly understood in research methods, and heuristics, is that whilst “phenomenology ends with the essence of experience; heuristics retains the essence of the person in experience” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985: 43).

Heuristics then advocates a high level of involvement from the researcher with their research question; the aim being that through this deep engagement new insights will begin to emerge. Moustakas (1990a) described this type of inquiry as entailing a certain process, beginning with an *initial engagement* with a concern or question; then *immersing* oneself in the topic; allowing a period of *incubation* in which the afore mentioned immersion works through; which then hopefully leads to an *illumination* of understanding

and new awareness; which in turn can be developed further and *explicated* as knowledge. The culmination of such a process should lead to the researcher being thoroughly familiar with all the data produced by such an inquiry, and following a period of solitude, would provide the basis for a production and presentation of a *creative synthesis*, which could take the form on any artistic medium. This synthesis would then be checked for *validation*, in terms of how much it represents the researcher's experiences of the immersion phase. (McLeod, 2011).

There are aspects of heuristic inquiry which are attractive for researching what psychotherapists say about the importance of theory to their work with clients. The researcher's role as questioner is held sharply in focus, which bears similarities to Heidegger's (1963/1927) aim of rendering the questioner transparent, and so goes some way to fulfilling the criterion of appreciating the relational nature of the research. Greater immersion with the research question may also help to render some of Polanyi's (1966) tacit knowledge more 'knowable' and the researcher's own defences could perhaps to some extent be negotiated through the transformative process which appears to define heuristic research.

However, heuristics was ultimately deemed unsuitable to the requirements of the researcher. The explicit focus in heuristics of the researcher's experience, whilst advantageous in many aspects, was felt to be problematic. Such a focus was thought not to be fully in accordance with the criterion of the research being open to all possible meanings, as others' (participants') experiences might be easily assimilated into the researcher's own agenda, and so any potentially emergent meanings could be limited. This point also has ramifications for the ethical focus considered earlier in the chapter:

heuristics may not place enough value on the 'otherness' of participants' experiences. Additionally, like grounded theory above, heuristics does not appear to take a position on the relationship between language and experience. As this was demonstrated earlier to be important to the research question, heuristics was ultimately dismissed as a possible research method for this study.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) developed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), is a “qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (Smith et al., 2009: 1). Based on the theoretical principles of phenomenology and hermeneutics, IPA places value in being *idiographic*, in that “there is a commitment to the particular, in the sense of *detail*, and therefore the depth of analysis” (Smith et al., 2009: 29, italics in original).

IPA, like most qualitative methods, uses interviews as providing the primary source of data for the study. The analysis entails six steps: reading and re-reading, in which interview transcripts are examined; initial noting, in which the “aim is to produce a comprehensive and detailed set of notes and comments on the data” (Smith et al., 2009: 83); developing emergent themes through considering the interrelationships between these notes; searching for connections across these emergent themes, which involves looking for patterns between emergent themes to generate what are known as superordinate themes; moving on the next case, which refers to repeating the same analysis for the next interview transcript (whilst attempting to 'bracket' the experience of conducting the first analysis); and finally looking for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2009).

Whilst there are many strengths of IPA, with it described as being both “flexible and rigorous” (McLeod, 2011: 151), the researcher felt that it was inappropriate to the aims of the present study. Smith et al. (2009) stress that “interpretations should be clearly developed from the phenomenological core, from the concerns of participants themselves” (p204), yet McLeod remarks that two out of the three IPA studies that he reviewed “incorporate strong interpretation of findings in terms of pre-existing constructs that are 'external' to the study, rather than having emerged from the data” (2011: 151). It appears that to some extent there is a tendency in IPA for participants' responses to be lost due to the researcher's theoretical interests being privileged. This might be fine, if the researcher's role was fully acknowledged, but McLeod (2011) remarks that “researcher reflexivity is not a major feature” in his review of the IPA literature, something perhaps surprising given how hermeneutics are part of IPA's theoretical basis. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that IPA may lack an appreciation of the relational nature of qualitative research. For this reason, and again because of a lack of clarity about the relationship between language and experience in the research method, IPA was not considered a suitable method for this study.

3.5 Narrative Analysis

After considering the research methods above, the researcher decided that approach based on narrative inquiry was most apposite to the aims of the study. Like discourse analysis, narrative inquiry focuses on language and its relationship to experience. Narrative research assumes that people “largely make sense of their experience, and communicate their experience to others, in the form of *stories*” (McLeod, 2011: 187, italics in original). Narrative inquiry may also be distinguished from other qualitative methods in that it

“explores the extended account rather than fragmenting it into discursive meaning-laden moments or thematic categories” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007: 430) This was felt to be an attractive quality for the researcher, and is something that will be returned to later.

Narrative inquiry may be understood as existing in its present form due to two cultural and academic movements (Andrews et al., 2013). The first of these was the growing popularity of humanistic approaches to sociology and psychology, which contrasted with more positivist and empirical approaches to the human sciences (e.g., Moustakas, 1990a). The second was the changing view of the human subject advocated by developments such as postmodernism and psychoanalysis (e.g., Lacan, 1977). Although post-modernism was wary about totalising narratives that attempted to make sense of multiple historical events, and indeed was 'defined' by Lyotard (1984) as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (in Loewenthal & Snell, 2007: 79), it like humanism, had an interest in how narratives are constructed on an individual level. That is, they both had an interest in how individuals tell stories and how they “impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Riessman, 1993: 2).

These different origins of narrative research equate to ontological and epistemological complexities. Is narrative viewed as giving external expression to “individual, internal representations of phenomena” (Andrews, 2013: 5), in that narrative reflects a pre-existing self? Or is narrative best understood as “forms of social code” (Andrews, 2013: 5), i.e., a method of communication through which the self is potentially constructed, a viewpoint perhaps more sympathetic to the 'decentred' subject common in post-modernism? As the reader may have guessed, narrative may be viewed as both. Why this makes it attractive to the researcher, and other reasons why narrative inquiry appears an apposite research

method to explore what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients, will now be discussed.

Why narrative inquiry?

This question may be answered with reference to three main points:

1. *Narrative inquiry allows for understandings of the psychotherapist as being able to construct personal identity through language, and therefore capable of having agency and of psychotherapeutic practice that is based on more personal values; but also as being subject-to various discourses, culture, tradition, and therefore theory.*

Perhaps the primary reason why narrative inquiry was considered an apposite method is that it was felt to offer an appropriate balance between viewing the human subject of inquiry as being an active, reflexive agent, capable of exercising choice and action, and being able to construct identity through language, but also crucially, being subject-to (and constituted by) various “social, cultural, and institutional discourses” (Riessman, 1993: 61). This balance is considered important by the researcher as it reflects the balance of asking a question about what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory to their work with clients.

The research aims not to bias possible responses from participants by using a method which makes certain assumptions about the importance of theory. If theory is understood as something which psychotherapists are likely, at least to some extent, to be subject-to, then the research method must appreciate that. In other words, if theory is understood as being a prevalent discourse, or akin to historic tradition, then the research method must

account for the way in which theory, to some extent, may constitute the psychotherapist. Equally, to allow for theory having less importance, or in other words, for psychotherapists to be able to conceive of their work as being less influenced by theory, and consequently, more influenced by other personal and experiential factors, then the chosen research method must also give weight to the psychotherapist as having agency, and able to construct their own identities through the stories they tell. Narrative inquiry was felt to do this, as although it typically favours a view of the active-agent subject, it also gives weight to a socially-constructed subject. It was because of narrative research having this 'balance' of perspectives that it was considered to be a more preferable option to discourse analysis, which does not give the same recognition of human agency.

2. Narrative inquiry aims to research what participants say.

Narrative inquiry was also felt to be sensitive to many of the issues previously considered in this chapter in relation to researching what participants say. Perhaps most importantly, narrative inquiry does not assume a direct link between what is said and what is meant. Language is not viewed as representing an 'inner' (e.g. Wittgenstein, 1958). Instead, narrative research takes the following view of language and meaning.

Sceptical about a correspondence theory of truth, language is understood as deeply constitutive of reality, not simply a technical device for establishing meaning. Informant's stories do not mirror a world 'out there'. They are constructive, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive (Riessman, 1993: 5).

This understanding of language, where “we are interpreting and creating texts at every juncture, letting symbols stand for or take the place of the primary experience, to which

we have no direct access” (Riessman, 1993: 15), fits with many of the issues considered previously in the thesis, including the philosophy of Wittgenstein, and particularly apparently in this last quote, post-structuralism. Instead, language in narrative is understood as being enmeshed with issues of personal identity and presentation: “in postmodern times, identities can be assembled and disassembled, accepted and contested” (Riessman, 2008: 7).

Narrative inquiry, or to be more precise, particular strands of narrative inquiry, also attempt to pay attention to the unique context of the interview, and attempt not to treat the transcript as a disembodied text. Riessman (2008), in her description of dialogic/performance narrative analysis emphasises the importance of a “close reading of contexts, including the influence of investigator, setting and social circumstances on the production and interpretation of the narrative” (p105).

This emphasis is welcomed by the researcher. Such an appreciation is not only in line with the philosophy of Wittgenstein (1958), but also pertains to the attempt to mitigate for the tendency of a reification of what is *said* (Levinas, 1981), and so helps to promote an ethical focus (Loewenthal, 2007). Narrative research can “illustrate the profound importance of context in the construction and performance of narrative” (Riessman, 2008: 137), and so is felt by the researcher to be an appropriate mode of inquiry.

3. Narrative inquiry supports a relational understanding of research.

Narrative research typically takes a view that narratives are formed dialogically and in an intersubjective context. Salmon (2013) illustrates this point:

All narratives are, in a fundamental sense, co-constructed. The audience, whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what can be taken for granted, what needs explaining, and so on. We now recognise that the personal account, in research interviews, which has traditionally been seen as the expression of a single subjectivity, is in fact always a co-construction' (Salmon, in Andrews et al., 2013: 199).

This viewpoint is in accordance with the aim of appreciating the importance of relational, inter-subjective processes considered earlier in the chapter, helping to render the researcher as an active participant in the production of knowledge.

Approaches to narrative inquiry

Whilst narrative inquiry was felt to be an apposite method for the present research question the researcher had still to decide which particular method of narrative research was most suitable. This variety of methods of narrative inquiry reflect that the “definition of narrative itself is in dispute, as indeed is the need for having one in the first place” (Andrews et al., 2013: 1). Consequently, there are few “clear accounts on how to analyse the data... [and] few well-defined debates on conflicting approaches within the field” (Andrews et al., 2013: 1).

Despite this lack of clarity, it is possible to describe a defined approach to narrative inquiry: structural narrative analysis, and consider whether such a method is suitable for implementing the research question. This is felt to be an important step as Labov's (1972) structural, or event-focused approach is considered genre-defining: “most investigators

cite it, apply it, or use it as a point of departure” (Riessman, 1993: 18).

Narratives, for Labov, have a structure, which if fully formed, comprise of six main elements: An *abstract* (a summary of what the story is about); an *orientation* (when was it, where was it, who did it happen to?); *complicating action* (what happened then?); an *evaluation* (what is the meaning of this and what significance does it have?); a *resolution* (what finally happened?); and a *coda* (bringing the story back to the present).

Labov's structural approach thus focuses not just on the content of the narrative (what is said), but also on form (how the story is told). His approach is often termed event-focused, in that it “facilitates the identification and analysis of event-narratives” (Patterson, 2013: 33). This is in accordance with Labov's understanding of narrative as “the construction of an objective event sequence” (Labov, 1982: 232) and its function as “recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (Labov, 1972: 359).

Strictly following Labov's structural approach did not seem ideal for the research. This was partly because his focus on the events contained within the narrative means that in applying his method, the narrator's *experience* of these events may receive less attention. As Patterson puts it, “an event-centric approach, which assumes the primacy of events, fails, therefore, to appreciate the essential creativity of the act of telling a story of personal experience, which involves *reconstructing* the past for the purposes of the present telling” (2013: 36), italics in original. Labov's definition of narrative therefore may be felt to “count as non-narrative much that is fundamental to personal narration” (Patterson, 2013: 38).

What is also missed in Labov's (1972) structural approach is the emphasis on the co-constructive nature of the narrative produced; something which has been already identified as important for the research question. "His [Labov's] assumption is that narrative is a relation among clauses rather than an interaction among participants" (Langellier, 1989: 248). Riessman also notes that in exemplars of structural narrative analysis "we see little about the evolving relationship between teller and listener that produced the emerging narrative" (2008: 102).

Instead, it was Riessman's (1993; 2008) approach that was felt to be an appropriate research method for the present study. Whilst her method includes thematic narrative analysis (in that it pays attention to the content of the narrative), and structural narrative analysis (in that it pays attention to the form of the narrative), it also attends to how narratives are dialogically constructed, and how narratives are performed.

For Riessman, it is not as if stories "emerge from an innermost "self"" (2008: 105). Instead stories "are composed and received in contexts – interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive" (2008: 105). The aim, then is to investigate "how social reality is constructed through interaction... gaze, gesture, and other nonverbal aspects of communication are sometimes considered" (2008: 106). Narrative is analysed "but both participant and listener/questioner must be included and context becomes important" (2008: 106).

Closely tied to this dialogical view of narrative is that of narrative as performance. Goffman (1974) believed that "what talkers undertake to do is not to provide information

to a recipient but to present dramas to an audience” (1974: 508-509). Riessman (2008) is also of this opinion, “one can't be a “self” by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in “shows” that persuade” (p106). This performance view of narrative is concerned with the shifting identity of the protagonist(s), how are they presenting themselves at any given moment? To reintroduce a question from the introduction, how are they trying to construct their relationships to theory? And what discourses may, perhaps unwittingly, be affecting this construction?

Epistemic Validity

It is the purpose of this section to clarify some of the epistemological assumptions in narrative analysis, and to consider what constitutes validity of findings produced from this research method. Lyotard (1984) said that it was “impossible to judge the existence or validity of narrative knowledge on the basis of scientific knowledge” (Sarup, 1993: 136). What then, are the criteria for knowledge produced from narrative analyses?

Narrative analysis is situated firmly within the qualitative paradigm with the interpretative role of the researcher discussed earlier in this chapter particularly evident. “Narrativization assumes point of view” says Riessman (1993: 64); both in terms of participants as active-agents providing *their own* narratives, and also the researcher providing *his own* interpretations about these narratives. How might the validity of the researcher's interpretations be assessed? In other words, by what standards are the findings produced by the research considered meaningful? Riessman (2008) provides the following criteria as a test of the validity of the findings: *persuasiveness* which refers to whether the interpretations of the researcher seem convincing and reasonable; *correspondence* which pertains to the degree of accuracy with which interpretations reflect actual narratives;

coherence, which deals with how well interpretations make sense to the overall interview, the local context, and established themes; and *pragmatic use*, which refers to the extent to which the findings become the basis for others' work. How will the research attempt to meet these criteria?

The extent to which interpretations made by the researcher are persuasive is something which will only be decided by the reader(s) of this text and perhaps has reference to some of the issues related to rhetoric and writing style considered in Polkinghorne (2007) to be a key facet of qualitative inquiry. Pragmatic use, "the ultimate test of validity" (Riessman, 2008: 193) is something which obviously cannot yet be determined. Coherence and correspondence intend to be made evident through the provision of a clear link between participant narrative and researcher interpretation. How narratives and their subsequent analysis is presented will be important in fulfilling these particular criteria. What appears critical is to allow the reader to easily check her interpretations with those of the researcher. However, the researcher fully acknowledges that his interpretations are unique to himself.

The knowledge produced through narrative analysis is knowledge which has been co-constructed within a particular context. The researcher is implicated in the findings firstly through helping to form the co-constructed narratives (as researcher) and secondly in the interpretation and analysis of these narratives (as a researcher and then as a narrator himself). The epistemological position of the research then is therefore broadly defined as relativistic, in that the findings are acknowledged to be a product of time and place; and also interpretivist, in that interpretations of the narratives other than those provided by the researcher are inevitable.

To reiterate, Riessman's (1993; 2008) method of narrative analysis, with a particular focus on dialogic/performance narrative analysis was felt to be particularly well suited to implementing the research question. The next chapter will describe how this method was used to investigate what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients.

Chapter 4 Method

Psychotherapists were asked to talk about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients, which allowed the researcher to investigate how important theory is in psychotherapy, when it is more (or less) important in psychotherapy, and to generally explore the relationships that psychotherapists may have with theory. To do this, interviews were chosen as the means of collecting data, and the method of narrative analysis chosen as the research method. Issues around ethics, health and safety, the storage of data, and the dissemination of the subsequent findings were all considered as part of this research.

4.1 Ethical considerations

As part of the process of conducting the research, the researcher sought ethical approval from the University's Ethics Board (see Appendix 1 for the *Ethics Application Form*). This approval was granted (see Appendix 3 for email detailing ethical approval). In guiding the researcher's ethical considerations, the work of Bond (2000) was given particular importance.

Of particular relevance to the research were considerations of trust, confidentiality, anonymity and record keeping. Trust was felt to be vital to any therapeutic relationship and also to the relationship between researcher and participants. "Establishing a high level of trust in the counselling is considered to be so fundamental that it is the primary principle in some constructions of counselling ethics" (Bond, 2000: 16). Trust appears closely allied to confidentiality; which is also thought to be fundamental to ethical

counselling and research. “In particular a client needs to feel that whatever has been disclosed will not be used to harm them. This usually means that disclosures are made by clients on the assumption that what is said remains confidential between the counsellor and the client” (Bond, 2000: 150). Part of ensuring confidentiality meant that potentially discerning characteristics of participants' interviews needed to be identified and then anonymised. This involved the use of “codes known exclusively by herself [the researcher]: in the form of numbers, fictitious initials, or fictitious names... no information is included within the records that could identify clients” (Bond, 2000: 196). Again, as in psychotherapeutic practice, the records kept from the research interviews were to be kept securely in a locked cabinet.

The ethics application process involved ensuring that any potential distress to participants was minimised, and that all participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The possibility of participants experiencing distress in talking about their clinical work was mitigated for through the understanding that participants, being practising psychotherapists, would be in regular supervision with another accredited psychotherapist, and so were advised to address any issues arising from taking part in this research with their supervisors. However, if this was neither sufficient nor appropriate, a debriefing interview would be offered by the researcher. In addition to this participants were provided with a list of organisations, including *The Samaritans*, that they could contact if required. Other factors, such as interview location, and issues around lone working comprised the ethics application form and were duly considered.

4.2 Risk assessment

Alongside ethical considerations, risk was also assessed and an application was submitted and then approved from the University's Ethics Board (see Appendix 2, *Risk Assessment*). The researcher identified various risks, which included the ethical concerns detailed above, and put steps in place to militate against them. These will now be summarised:

Potential hazards included:

- 1) Emotional distress - The process of being interviewed and the subject matter being discussed could conceivably have an emotional impact on the participant.
- 2) Discomfort at being audio recorded
- 3) Lone worker safety at interviews - Lone working, particularly if travelling to an unknown location with people not previously known to the researcher, represented risk.
- 4) Travelling to and from interviews
- 5) Electrical equipment/recording equipment/tripping on cables
- 6) Confidentiality/anonymity - Confidential information will be discussed at the interview that could compromise the participant or someone they know.
- 7) Data storage

With these risks identified, the corresponding control measures were considered appropriate.

- 1) Participants are trained therapists and are used to discussing emotive topics.

The consent form will highlight the subject of the interview and participants will be aware that they can withdraw from the research at any stage

- 2) Participants are aware before the interview commences that they will be audio-recorded and can stop the recording if necessary.
- 3) The researcher will plan journeys so is unlikely to get lost or find themselves in an unsafe location. The participants will be registered psychotherapists and so are unlikely to represent obvious risk in the sense that they subscribe to a code of ethics.
- 4) As above.
- 5) Potential hazards in the interview room will be removed/minimized.
- 6) The researcher, as a trainee therapist, is familiar in maintaining confidentiality and will keep data stored on an encrypted laptop.
- 7) As above.

It should also be mentioned that how the findings would be disseminated also comprised the *Ethics Application Form* (see Appendix 1). The possibility that the thesis may be published, and the different ways in which the findings within it may be disseminated were both considered. Again, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was regarded as key.

4.3 Participation recruitment

Participants were all psychotherapists who were registered with the *United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy* (UKCP). This was deemed an appropriate level of registration for a study which was explicitly concerned with 'psychotherapy' rather than related disciplines such as 'psychoanalysis' or 'counselling'. The UKCP describes itself as the

“UK’s leading professional body for the education, training and accreditation of psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors” (<http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/about-us>).

Participation recruitment did not specify criteria other than membership of the UKCP. The theoretical orientation of participants was not considered as either inclusion or exclusion criteria because the researcher was interested in the importance of theory in psychotherapy as a whole, and was not investigating, for instance the importance of existential theory to existential psychotherapists compared to psychoanalytic theory to psychoanalytic psychotherapists. Therefore there was no discrimination between sub-groups within psychotherapy.

Participants had all responded to an email sent inviting them to participate in the study, which went to fifty psychotherapists in the local area using the 'Find a Therapist' section of the UKCP website. This initial email simply asked them to open the attached *Participant Invitation* letter (see Appendix 4) which provided details of the research and the topic of the proposed interviews.

The first six participants to respond were responded to by the researcher, with subsequent email contact ensuring that they all understood the topic of the interview and the time commitment required. All participants then had to fill in the *Consent Form* (see appendix 5) before the interview began. This provided details of the ethical issues detailed previously and made it clear to potential participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Further responses from applicants after the initial six had been contacted were replied to and thanked for their interest, but informed that they were no

longer required for the present study, although asked if their contact details could be taken should any participants withdraw.

Six participants were deemed an appropriate number for the research method narrative analysis that was employed. Riessman (2008) comments that “the methods are not appropriate for studying large numbers of nameless, faceless subjects” (p18).

4.4 Interviews

Interview preparation

Interviews were chosen as the means of collating meaningful data, as opposed to other means of methods such as analysis of textual or visual materials. Whilst interviews have been criticised from a postmodern perspective in that they may underestimate the “complexity, uniqueness, and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction” (Scheurich, 1997: 64), it was felt, nevertheless, that using research interviews suited a research question asking what psychotherapists *say*. More broadly, Kvale and Brinkmann summarise the purpose of the qualitative research interview is “to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives” (2009: 24).

Riessman advocates “5 to 7 broad questions about the topic of inquiry, supplemented by probe questions in case the respondent has trouble getting started” (1993: 55). However, she also stresses that “interviews are conversations in which both participants... develop meaning together, a stance requiring interview practices that give considerable freedom to both” (1993: 55). This sentiment appears very important to narrative analysis. “Although we have particular paths we want to cover related to the substantive and theoretical foci of

our studies, narrative interviewing necessitates following participants down *their* trails” (Riessman, 2008: 24, italics in original). Indeed, Riessman (2008) appears to warn about asking too many questions, which may lead to question-answer exchanges, instead recommending an attempt to establish “a climate that allows for storytelling in all its forms” (p23). This 'climate' appears one in which the researcher should “approach interviews as conversations” (Riessman, 1993: 56). Riessman advocates following up a general description with a question designed to elicit an experiential response which may be rich in narrative, such as “can you remember a particular time when....?” (2008: 25), or “what was the experience like for you?” (1993: 55). Ultimately the interview is one which is “collaboratively developed” (Riessman, 2008: 26), in which the aim is to form “dialogic relationships and greater communicative equality” (2008: 26), and whilst there are recommendations, there is no 'technique' to follow.

Interview format

Despite Riessman initially mentioning 5-7 questions, it appeared from the above analysis of her recommendations, that an unstructured interview approach was required. Therefore each interview began by the research question being asked: “What can you tell me about the importance, if any, of theory to your work with clients?” The responses of the participants then led the researcher to ask follow up questions depending on what the participant was talking about. This was felt to be preferential to asking any other pre-ordained questions which may infringe upon following the participants' 'trails' of narrative.

As previously stated, the researcher attempted to facilitate an environment which gave the best chance for participants to respond openly and expansively. Ultimately, the researcher used his experience of being a psychotherapist to do this, in the sense of limiting direct

questions about the research topic and attempting to 'follow' the direction of participants' responses. As Riessman states, “provided investigators can give up control over the research process and approach interviews as conversations, almost any question can generate a narrative” (1993: 56).

The interviews lasted approximately an hour, which felt like an appropriate amount of time for significant material to be gathered.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted in places suitable for such activity. All participants were interviewed in the settings in which they normally practice as psychotherapists. For four of the participants, this was where they conducted therapy privately; for two participants it was in the setting in which they worked. For these two participants, permission to conduct the interview on their work premises was sought and duly granted.

The interviews were recorded using a dictaphone which was stored securely between and after interviews (see Appendices 1 and 2). After the interviews were completed participants were given a *Debrief Letter* (see Appendix 6) explaining the next stages of the research, again reminding them of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, and providing them with contact details of the researcher and of relevant organisations.

4.5 Transcriptions

Once the interviews were completed, each interview was transcribed by the interviewer, with any potentially distinguishing information removed or changed to ensure anonymity

(see Appendix 3). These transcriptions provided accounts of the whole of the interviews. Riessman advocates beginning with “a rough transcription, a first draft of the entire interview that gets the words and other striking features of the conversation on paper (e.g., crying, laughing, very long pauses)” (1993: 56).

Selection of narrative

Once the interviews had been 'roughly' transcribed in their entirety, the next step was to select passages to retranscribe for more detailed analysis. This selection of these passages was only to be achieved after spending “a considerable amount of time scrutinizing the rough drafts of transcriptions... across a number of interviews” (Riessman, 1993: 57). This process aims to open up possibilities for the focus of analysis (Riessman, 1993). As Riessman explains, “boundaries may depend on the investigator's overall framework... [yet]... informants direct interpretation by the way they organize their narratives, including parts and their relation to the whole” (1993: 60).

In addition to this interplay between the researcher's theoretical interests and what emerged from the participants' words, what also guided the researcher's selection of passages for retranscription was whether passages passed criteria for a definition of narrative. As mentioned, the definition of narrative itself is in dispute, as is the need for a definition in the first place (Andrews et al., 2013). However, Riessman insists that “all talk and text is not narrative” (2008: 5). For the present research narrative was distinguished by “the consequential linking of events or ideas” (Riessman, 2008: 5). Narrative may be ordered temporally or spatially, but “can also be organised thematically and episodically” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007: 430). Partly, what was identified as narrative was extended accounts from participants. “Story-telling typically involves a longer turn at talk than is

customary” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007: 430).

Retranscription

Once the narrative segments have been chosen using the criteria above Riessman (1993) advocates parsing these segments into numbered lines. This may be done in various ways according to different narrative researchers, although Riessman (1993) regards Labov's (1972; 1982) framework as an “essential first step to interpreting them' (p59).

Therefore the narratives were retranscribed according to Labov's framework which seeks to highlight the following narrative elements, some of which, although not necessarily all, constitute narrative. Lines are numbered through being an individual clause within a sentence, and grouped in order to correspond to one of the following elements:

- Abstract – summarises the point of the narrative.
- Orientation – provides the setting of the narrative.
- Complicating Action (CA) – describes the sequence of the narrative.
- Evaluation - comments about the complicating actions.
- Resolution – resolves plot.
- Coda – ends narrative and returns listener to present.

Retranscribing in this way also allowed the structure of the narrative to be made more apparent, one of three main aspects of the analysis of the narrative alongside thematic and dialogic/performance.

To provide an example of this, a narrative segment from one of the interviews, Annette

(not her actual name, like all names hereafter), was retranscribed in the following way:

01 The first time I meet somebody

02 I suppose I'm sort of listening

03 to the way they express themselves,

04 the way they describe

05 whatever problem they've brought.

Orientation – lines 01-05 provide the setting of the narrative, in this instance the first session with a new client.

06 Listening to the words and whether

07 they're using metaphor

08 and how concrete they seem to be.

09 Whether they talk about dream or fantasies,

10 the way they talk about relationships.

Complicating Action (CA) - lines 06-10 develop the narrative, in this case what Annette is listening for in this first session.

11 And these sort of things tend to inform, um,

12 maybe the kind of... theoretical approach that might occur

13 to me when I'm thinking about them.

Evaluation – lines 11 -13 reflect upon these developments. It appears that what Annette listens to decides how

she may use theory.

14 So, um some people, they're just, some people I find

15 suggest different ways of thinking about the problems that they have

16 and the relationships they have.

Resolution – lines 14-16 end the plot of the narrative, bringing it back to the present. In this instance, Annette summarises how different patients mean that her use of theory also differs.

4.6 Analysis

As can be seen from the above example, there is no clear division between retranscription and analysis, something which Riessman (1993, 2008) confirms. “Different transcription conventions lead to and support different interpretations and theoretical positions, and they ultimately create different narratives” (Riessman, 2008: 50). However, in addition to the type of retranscription detailed above, each participant's narrative analysis also comprised the following three elements:

Thematic analysis

This analyses the content of the narrative, asking questions about *what* is said in the narrative. This form of analysis is considered somewhat similar to Grounded Theory and IPA although “narrative analysts do preserve sequence and the wealth of detail contained in long sequences” (Riessman, 2008: 74) which reflects a more 'case-centred' philosophy.

Typically thematic narrative analysts do not fracture participants' accounts into “thematic categories as grounded theory coding would do” (Riessman, 2008: 57) but interpret narrative accounts as a whole. As Riessman states, the “focus is on the act the narrative reports and the moral of the story” (2008: 62). Prior theory and the researcher's interests “serve[s] as a resource for interpretation of spoken and written narratives” (2008: 73).

For instance, in the narrative segment considered above it appeared to the researcher that an evident theme was that of theory being related to language. Annette uses the word 'listening' to describe her activity twice in the segment (lines 2 and 6), as a means of telling the researcher how listening to her patient's language led her to use certain theories. Another theme that is perhaps apparent is how theory is not a starting point for her practice. Instead she is describing how different patients lead her to consider different aspects of theory.

Structural analysis

This analyses the organisation of the narrative, building on the focus on the content of thematic analysis by asking questions about *how* the content is structured and *how* the story is told. This “adds insight beyond which can be learned from referential meanings alone” (Riessman, 2008: 77). Amongst what is considered is the effectiveness of the narrator; how do they persuade the audience about the authenticity of what they are describing and the relevance of them speaking about it? Close attention to linguistic devices are important here, as are sequence and components of narrative, as previously described with reference to Labov (1972, 1982), whose approach helps to “identify the function of a particular clause in the overall structure of the narrative” (Riessman, 2008: 89).

In the narrative segment considered above we can see how Annette provides a clear setting for her story both spatially and temporally: the consulting room in the first session with a new client. She carries the action forward in the narrative, contrasting her (in)activity as a listener to the patient's verbal expression. She then steps out of this setting to evaluate what she has said so far, stating how what the patient says influences how she may use theory. Here she uses a plethora of conditional words: 'might', 'may', and 'tend' all feature. These may be said to undermine the certainty of her narrative but also simultaneously reinforce what she is describing; that she is led by the client rather than driven by theory. This view is reiterated as Annette concludes her narrative.

Dialogic/performance analysis

This further layer of analysis aims to build on a focus on what the narrative is about and how it is constructed. "It interrogates how talk is interactively (dialogically) produced and performed as narrative" (Riessman, 2008: 105). Specifically it includes the effects of the "investigator, setting and social circumstances on the production and interpretation of the narrative" (2008: 105). It therefore supplements the *what* of the thematic analysis and the *how* of the structural analysis with asking questions about *who* the narrative is directed towards and the *identity* of the narrator, as well as asking *when* and *why* the narrative is produced in the specific way it is. Riessman links the concept of performance to the idea of a constructed and preferred 'self': that "identities are situated and accomplished with audiences in mind" (2008: 106). This aspect of narrative analysis is therefore highly interpretive, whilst simultaneously attempting to illuminate the role of the interpreter on the narrative.

Dialogic/performance analysis entails a focus on contexts, whether they are “interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive” (Riessman, 2008: 105). Therefore part of the analysis questions “the origins of the words that narrators “naturalize”” (Riessman, 2008: 124). Language is not taken as literal. Instead “social, cultural, and institutional discourses... must be brought to bear to interpret them” (Riessman, 1993: 61).

In the example considered above it appears that Annette is comfortable expressing herself in the identity of a psychotherapist. Speaking to the researcher, whom she perhaps understands to be another therapist, she talks about how the language used by the patient plays a role in informing how she may think of theory. She seems to have constructed a preferred identity as a competent psychotherapist, and she does not describe what she finds difficult, instead describing her approach in a coherent manner. Whilst she describes an approach which does not seem theory-driven, her use of words like 'dreams' and 'fantasies' perhaps reveal her as located within a psychoanalytic discourse, suggesting that psychoanalytic theory may still play a pivotal role in her thinking. However, the broad point she is making has humanistic overtones to it; that the individuality of the patient is cherished.

Presentation of findings

Narrative analysis aims to provide a case-centric presentation of narrative, where individual stories are privileged as much as possible. “Narrative study relies on (and sometimes has to excavate) extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units” (Riessman, 2008: 12). Therefore each participant's story is presented with effort taken to retain as much of their own words as possible, whilst simultaneously allowing space for the researcher's own analysis based on those components considered above.

However, it is important to remind the reader that how the stories are presented comprises part of the analysis. “By displaying text in particular ways and by making decisions about the boundaries of narrative segments, we provide grounds for our arguments, just as a photograph guides the viewer's eye with lenses and cropping” (Riessman, 2008: 50). With these thoughts in mind, the findings of the narrative analysis are presented as follows.

Chapter 5 Analysis and Findings

What follows is a presentation of each participant's story. As explained in the previous chapter, narrative segments are chosen for reasons that they have relevance to the research question, and fulfil the criteria of being narrative (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). Narrative segments are presented according to Labov's (1972, 1982) structural framework, with the narrative elements identified on the right-hand side of the page. These, to remind the reader, are as follows:

- Abstract – summarises the point of the narrative.
- Orientation – provides the setting of the narrative.
- Complicating Action (CA) – describes the sequence of the narrative.
- Evaluation - comments about the complicating actions.
- Resolution – resolves plot.
- Coda – ends narrative and returns listener to present.

Line numbers are included in the presented segments to aid clarity in the analysis. The researcher's voice in the interview is depicted in italicised font for similar purposes.

The analysis consists of the three aspects considered in the previous chapter: Thematic Analysis, Structural Analysis, and Dialogic/Performance analysis. Analysis is provided after each narrative segment. A brief introduction to each interview is provided, as well as summary of each participant's story. Following the presentation of each story, the overall findings are summarised.

5.1 Alice's story

Alice works as a psychotherapist both in private practice and in primary care. She is in her fifties and has practised as a psychotherapist for many years, initially training in integrative psychotherapy. In primary care she works to a time-limited structure, the challenges of which she talked about frequently over the course of the interview. Alice also spoke about some of the theories she found most helpful, often describing these theories in depth.

01 The one theory I've found particularly good is CAT. Cognitive Analytic Therapy.

Abstract

02 because there's a sort of, you know it's supposed to be longer

03 you know it's supposed to be 24 sessions or something

CA

04 but you can use it in short term work.

Evaluation

05 But because it brings in object relations,

06 and sort of deeper awareness of, um,

07 you know particular survival mechanisms that people

08 have got into particularly when they're young.

09 And modifying those so people, you know, sort of understand

10 that they were trying to survive.

11 But that now it's not enough.

CA

12 That's been really helpful so I use that a lot.

Resolution

Thematic analysis

Alice here speaks about Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT), describing its general features. She begins by saying that she has found it 'particularly good' and then proceeds to explain why she feels this way. It suits her short term work in the primary care setting in which she practises, yet it appears to marry this with a 'deeper awareness'. What appears important here, beyond the fact that theory seems to be important to her, and is used a lot, is that Alice wants to talk about the theory she uses. That the word 'use' is repeated (lines 4 and 12) perhaps suggests that she regards theory as having a similar function to a 'tool'.

Structural analysis

The narrative's structure lacks a clear setting. This may be because a description of her theoretical approach forms the basis of the narrative. Theory is described both in terms of its view of human nature, and why the insight it provides is important (line 11). In this sense, the narrative structure may be seen as being dominated by theory to the extent to which *theory is the story*. The narrative is directed at the researcher; the use of the word 'you' in line 4 may be regarded as an attempt to engage the researcher with the point she is making and the theory she is describing.

Dialogic/Performance analysis

Alice appears to take a position of a teacher of the theory. Theory here may be seen to play the role of validator, in that through her description of theory, she shows she has knowledge of it, and so is competent. The narrative is directed to the researcher, and so the performance is geared to place the researcher into the position of someone who can learn from her.

13 I think [theory] is important because you are helping people	
14 to have some way of understanding	
15 why they experience what they do	
16 and why they do what they do	
17 and what they can do differently having understood it.	Evaluation
18 And it can be very liberating for them.	Resolution
19 <i>Yeah that understanding can be very liberating.</i>	
20 Mmm. And on another level, a completely different level,	
21 dream work can be very liberating for them	
22 because, you know, people are having a lot of dreams.	Abstract
23 For instance, I saw someone in the surgery the other day, a very nice lady.	
	Orientation
24 She said 'Oh god I'm having all these dreams'.	
25 I said 'Right, OK, why not write them down'.	
26 So she brought her book with her	
27 and every dream related to something really significant in her past	
28 that she hadn't addressed or processed.	CA
29 It was extraordinary!	Evaluation

30 And I think when she saw, goodness me,

31 this is what my unconscious is telling me, you know like letters from your unconscious

32 you know it's very empowering because that's your inside telling you things,

33 and um helping you.

Resolution

34 If you pay attention to it, it's really helpful.

Coda

Thematic analysis

Alice's narrative segment may be regarded as consisting of two parts. The first part (lines 13 – 18), summarises her views on the importance of theory, which are, ostensibly, that theory can provide liberation for the client through helping them to understand themselves. In the second part of the segment, Alice changes tack, talking about something 'on a completely different level'. She describes the importance of dreams and how working with them has been very 'helpful'. What is perhaps most interesting is that whilst Alice's narrative on working with dreams contains some theoretical terms (line 31) she is actually describing something very personal and intuitive, both in the case of her client (line 27) and herself as psychotherapist (line 32): 'it's your inside telling you things'. The story that Alice begins to tell about theory being important appears to morph into something different then, instead providing an insight into how Alice values something akin to intuition as a way of working. In this sense, Alice perhaps somewhat undermines the point that she appears to initially be trying to make, and subsequently theory is shown as less important to her than she initially states it to be.

Structural analysis

In this second part of the narrative Alice employs a conventional event-focused structure

to illustrate how working with dreams can be very helpful. She appears to be very involved when recounting this part of the narrative, exclaiming 'extraordinary', and 'goodness me', which accentuate the meaningfulness of her story. Similarly, direct speech is used (lines 24 and 25) to add authenticity to the events that Alice is recalling.

Dialogic/Performance analysis

The researcher's reiteration of the word 'liberating' serves as an ending to the first part of Alice's narrative and as a beginning to the second. Again Alice appears to construct an identity as that of a teacher of theory, particularly towards the close (line 34) of this segment.

Summary

Alice's description of the CAT approach means that she talks extensively about theory. This allows her to construct herself as someone who knows their theory. Theory here is seen as the language, or story, that Alice knows and which she values. However, Alice's attempt to describe the importance of theory later in the interview is somewhat undermined by her recollection of her work with a patient. Close attention to language here reveals theory as perhaps less important than she initially states it to be, and also entangled with her own personal intuition and experience. Alice appears to warm to the position of the teacher of theory in the interview. The researcher seems to allow this dynamic to develop through remaining relatively quiet.

5.2 Annette's story

Annette is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist working in private practice. She is around

sixty years old and has been working in private practice for many years. After her initial clinical training she completed a PhD in Psychoanalytic Studies. She began the interview by talking about her first session with a new client, speaking slowly and thoughtfully.

01 I think probably the time I'm most aware of thinking theoretically

02 is the first time I meet somebody.

Abstract

03 *What happens the first time you meet somebody?*

04 The first time I meet somebody

05 I suppose I'm sort of listening

06 to the way they express themselves,

07 the way they describe

08 whatever problem they've brought.

Orientation

09 Listening to the words and whether

10 they're using metaphor

11 and how concrete they seem to be.

12 Whether they talk about dream or fantasies,

13 the way they talk about relationships.

CA

14 And these sort of things tend to inform, um,

15 maybe the kind of... theoretical approach that might occur

16 to me when I'm thinking about them.

Evaluation

17 So, um, some people, they're just, some people I find

18 suggest different ways of thinking about the problems that they have

19 and the relationships they have.

Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Annette begins her narrative by describing her thoughts in an initial meeting with a client.

Annette does not describe herself as working from a fixed theoretical position, and instead talks of how the client's language appears to help her gain some initial understanding of them, and that theory may assist her in doing this.

Structural analysis

Annette not only takes time in the narrative to develop the setting (lines 04 to 08) - located within the consulting room – but also develops the narrative at a gentle pace. The effect of this gradual development in narrative, is that Annette is experienced as patient and able to listen, and so reflects the content of her story. She evaluates what she has said by concluding that her theoretical approach is based on what she hears from her patients.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

The freedom that Annette presents in terms of her relationship to theory is perhaps partially undermined by describing 'dreams and fantasies' as what she especially attends to. Whilst in general the narrative illustrates how Annette shows herself as a careful listener to her patients, she also appears to some extent inadvertently framed by a psychoanalytic discourse.

20 The way they express themselves to me

21 kind of suggests to me

22 what might be a useful approach to take

23 when thinking about them

24 and talking to them,

25 making interpretations to them maybe.

Evaluation

26 Um, so, some people might respond really well positively,

27 and find useful, say a more Jungian way of thinking about things

28 that might be archetypes, might be quite symbolic.

29 And other people might be say very much in touch with say their inner child.

30 Other people might not be at all, and quite resistant

31 to thinking about that they might have an inner child.

CA

32 So those sort of things really I think would be, um,

33 when I'm most aware of thinking about

34 various theoretical approaches.

Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Annette appears to be making the point that her patient will lead her to using theory in a particular way. She describes two theoretical notions - Jungian symbolism, and the idea of an inner child – as examples of theory that she may use depending on the patient. The use of theory seems to be pragmatic. Annette attempts not to be limited to her own theoretical biases here.

Structural Analysis

As in the previous segment Annette talks about 'thinking' (line 33) about theory, or that theory may 'suggest' (lines 18 and 21) itself to her. Again, the relationship she presents with theory is one which is fluid and not tightly defined. This appears consistent with her use of the word 'might'; Annette does not want to be too prescriptive in her approach.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Annette again uses psychoanalytic discourse in this section of narrative. This may be because she wishes to show her knowledge of psychoanalytic theory, but it also seems to be aimed at the researcher who she takes to understand something of the theory she is describing. Whilst the researcher is silent in this section Annette seems very aware of his presence through the theoretical concepts she mentions. That Annette talks of these theories (lines 33 and 34) perhaps suggests that she intends to present herself as knowledgeable of theory, although she does not wish to be constrained by it.

35 I mean for me theory's something that... Orientation

36 it's a possibility,

37 it's not an answer, it's not something set in stone.

38 so if it doesn't work then I think

39 'oh well I'll try something else'.

40 I don't think this is the way that I'm going to look at this person

41 and I'm going to be interpreting everything they say through that lens. CA

42 It's... no I think it... I find it important to be much more flexible than that.

43 To try and find a common language Evaluation

44 and it's in that first session where I'm wondering

45 where that common language might be found.

Resolution

Thematic Analysis

The importance of theory, then, for Annette appears to be something that cannot be guaranteed. Theory does not guide the work from the outset. It can be either employed or discarded, depending on whether it works or not. The casual nature of this sentiment is summarised by Annette's use of an internal voice. 'Oh well I'll try something else' appears to emphasise Annette's lack of attachment to a particular theory. Instead, she sees her project more as finding a 'common language' with the client, something which theory may help with. Theory, in this sense, is regarded as a language. Its relevance is in its ability to contribute meaningfully to a conversation between patient and psychotherapist.

Structural Analysis

The long sentences Annette uses appear to support her relaxed attitude to theory. Her use of the word 'lens' suggests that Annette will pursue a visual metaphor, but instead she switches to a linguistic one. The visual metaphor may be regarded as being aligned to more rigid use of theory, as if one might be unable to escape the lens of theory. Certainly, the linguistic metaphor suggests something more relationship-based and co-produced rather than something imposed on the client by the therapist.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Annette constructs herself as a psychotherapist who is unencumbered by theory in the sense that she is 'flexible' (line 42) in her approach. She does not want to present herself as

having any particular theoretical allegiance. She appears to want to position herself as being more interested in the well-being of the patient than with any particular theory. In this sense, theory may be regarded as being relatively unimportant to her work.

46 I see theory as hypotheses.

47 I think they're all hypotheses.

Orientation

48 They're saying, well it could be like this.

49 How about we think, it could be like this.

CA

50 That would be the way I tend to be working with patients,

51 to say... it would always be a questioning, a tentative...

Evaluation

52 I wouldn't say that's because such and such.

53 Clearly that's what's happened and why,

54 that's why you're having these problems that you're having.

CA

55 I would put things much more tentatively than that.

Evaluation

56 The way of beginning to explore something

57 that the patient can throw away or lose.

58 You know, accept as something helpful, something true maybe,

59 or something which doesn't have any resonance or meaning.

CA

60 Because I think however true something is,

Thematic Analysis

The plot of the narrative moves between describing how theory may entail certain hypotheses to describing how her approach in a session is similarly questioning. She views theory as tentative, and describes her approach as similarly so (line 55). The test of these hypotheses appears to be whether they are felt to be meaningful to the patient. Again, Annette is saying that theory is important only insofar as it is judged so by the patient. Annette sums up her narrative in the final coda: meaningfulness and usefulness trump any notion of truth when deciding how important theory should be.

Structural analysis

The narrative has a poetic quality to it; the repetition of the word hypotheses seems to help Annette to understand the theme of her narrative and then expand upon it.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Annette appears thoughtful, able to consider her relationship to theory. Her talk of the value of truth and meaning position her as someone able to step back and consider a question from afar, rather than feeling entwined with it. She presents herself as unattached to theory, only interested in whatever it takes for therapy to be helpful to her clients.

Summary

Annette describes herself as being flexible in her use of theory. Its importance is not a given. Rather the importance of theory is predicated on its helpfulness. The theme of

pragmatism is evident throughout her story. Theory is not regarded as being akin to truth. Instead, it may be important to her but only if it is meaningful to the patient. Annette also repeatedly uses a linguistic metaphor. What appears important for Annette is whether the client can speak in a particular theoretical language. It is that which determines theory's usefulness and importance. Annette presents herself as being more interested in the patient's well-being than with anything else. She appears confident but is keen to show how tentative her approach is. The freedom with which she approaches her task is somewhat undermined by the psychoanalytic discourse which she seems to be speaking from, suggesting that psychoanalytic theory may play more of a role in her thinking than she may realise.

5.3 Eleanor's story

Eleanor is a psychodrama psychotherapist working at a comprehensive school. She is estimated to be in her forties, and did her initial training in her twenties. Eleanor began the interview by saying, 'I erred away from theory because I'm dyslexic.' However, she also told me she had been thinking before the interview about how important theory is to her and had come to the realisation that it 'was everything to her'.

01 Theory is everything. I was surprised to find that actually.

Abstract

02 And I was thinking that if I'm not a great theorist

03 how can I say that theory is everything?

04 And I think for me,

05 my training was in psychodrama

Orientation

06 and so the psychotherapy training I had was incredibly experiential
 07 so a lot of the theory we did was sitting around
 08 and talking and trying out on each other and stuff like that CA
 09 which worked a treat on me. Evaluation
 10 And I fall back to it, all of the time.
 11 It's almost like it runs through my veins. CA
 12 And I think when I'm working with people that don't have a strong theory base
 13 or they haven't got to grips with it, or argued with it enough,
 14 or thought about where they sit on the ideas of attachment,
 15 using that as an example. Evaluation
 16 *Yeah.*
 17 I find that in their work they are too wishy-washy. Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Eleanor describes how she has surprised herself by realising how important theory is to her. She talks about how she can experience other therapists who don't engage with theory as too 'wishy-washy'. It is important to note how Eleanor is describing theory as inseparable from the other activities in her training: 'sitting around and talking', and in doing so it makes it accessible to her.

Structural Analysis

Eleanor sets up the story by giving herself a paradox to solve (lines 2-3), before describing her initial psychotherapy training. She provides a brisk run through the ethos of her training, something which is evident in the simplistic narrative structure, and which also accentuates her story of how experiential and practical her training was and how this suited her (line 9).

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Eleanor constructs her relationship to theory as different to those therapists who 'don't have a strong theory base', implying that she knows these people but is not one of them. Her preferred self is not 'wishy-washy'.

18 Theory for me... so I'm called the school counsellor here

19 but I'm not a counsellor, I'm a psychotherapist.

Abstract

20 And I'm forever thinking to myself 'why am I doing it?'

Orientation

21 You know so that I can sit and listen to somebody

22 until the cows come home and that's often then something.

23 But in psychotherapy it's more about

24 'what am I doing?' 'why am I doing it?'

25 and 'what am I trying to achieve?'

26 and 'how am I going to do that?'

27 coming from the angle that I want to come from.

28 And though I might use some of my original training
29 and I might use some of my other training that I have been to over the years
30 and pick bits of theory that I think will fit for the client. CA

31 So being much more eclectic about my theory
32 and about what I'm going to use on this particular issue
33 and see how this works with this person. Evaluation

34 So from originally thinking I can't talk about theory and I'll be a let down.

35 *Haha.*

36 It's everything. Resolution

Thematic Analysis

In this section, Eleanor expands upon her view that theory is 'everything', again using this same expression. From line 31 she seems to move back to her central point, again stating that theory, which initially she didn't regard as that important, actually seems very important in her work with clients. She also describes theory as being something that she can select and then use (lines 29 and 30).

Structural Analysis

From lines 24-26 she asks herself four questions which seemingly pertain to the difference between counselling and psychotherapy. These however, help to provide momentum in the narrative thereafter, a sense augmented by her repetition of the word 'and'.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Eleanor's questions to herself reveal that it is having a grasp of theory that for her defines the difference between psychotherapy and counselling. This suggests that having knowledge of theory is part of her personal identity as a psychotherapist. Her description of theory as being something that she can select and then use perhaps contrasts with how she previously reported it (as running through her veins). This relationship to theory seems to fit with Eleanor's view of herself as being experienced and therefore able to 'pick bits of theory that I think will fit for the client'. Eleanor also appears worried about being a 'let down' for the interviewer for fear that she would have nothing to say. Realising that theory is 'everything' has given her something to talk about. It appears that being questioned about theory has created some anxiety, which led to her both stating how important theory is, and then positioning herself as someone able to use it appropriately.

51 I think I always do come back in my head to some of the

52 you know some of the stuff in the years of training that I have had. Orientation

53 Thinking about groups, thinking how people fit in groups,

54 what the dynamics of the groups are

55 and that's all theory and Moreno and Yalom and all sorts of... CA

56 but I don't think about it like that any more, all these years later. Resolution

57 I don't sit and think...

58 *What's the difference? You don't think of it...*

59 Separately.

60 *Yes.*

61 That's the difference.

62 So I think that's what I mean when I say that's where I go to. Evaluation

63 When I'm unsure about something,

64 or when something's too much, that's where I go, CA

65 I lean on my theory. Resolution

66 Um, and in supervision, Orientation

67 she, my supervisor, is always giving me bits of theory

68 and helping me think about where it sits theoretically

69 or offering me a new something which has come out. CA

70 She's much better than me. Evaluation

71 Um, which is a relief because then I don't have to get stuck in it

72 and feel like I can't do it which is my tendency to do. Resolution

Thematic Analysis

In this segment Eleanor returns to some of the themes that are apparent throughout the interview: the importance of her initial training, the anxiety about learning and talking about theory, and her view that theory is all-encompassing. Theory is described as both a physical place and a sanctuary. Her supervisor is also regarded as providing theory for her.

Structural Analysis

She organizes the narrative temporally, returning to her initial training (line 52) before swiftly returning to the present, 'all those years later' (line 56). This, perhaps, gives the narrative an obvious autobiographical flavour.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

A feature of this segment of narrative is the extent to which the researcher shapes it, perhaps leading Eleanor to say that now she doesn't regard theory and practice separately as she used to. This co-production of meaning pushes Eleanor into expanding her narrative more than she would otherwise do (lines 61-65). Eleanor is self-deprecating in her comparison with her supervisor, which adds texture to her theme of theory helping her when she's struggling. It also corresponds to some of the anxiety Eleanor appears to feel about her own understanding of theory and how theoretical knowledge seems linked to psychotherapeutic competence.

Summary

Eleanor's story provides rich and multifarious material pertaining to the importance of theory in her work with clients. She describes theory having great importance to her upon

reflection. It is described as everything to her, although she later also describes it as something which she can choose from and use appropriately. She associates theory with 'sitting around and talking', and also describes theory as a sanctuary, somewhere she can 'go to' when she is finding psychotherapeutic practice difficult. It is also notable how theory to some extent defines psychotherapy for Eleanor, differentiating it from counselling. Structurally, Eleanor's narrative can perhaps be regarded as frequently rather convoluted. This may be related to her anxiety about the interview and the topics discussed in it. It is as if theory is closely associated with psychotherapeutic competence, and the researcher duly taking the role of the assessor. Eleanor provides multiple voices in the interview, sometimes taking the role of someone who is theoretically knowledgeable compared to others, but at other times being more self-deprecating, with others portrayed as having a greater knowledge of theory.

5.4 Yasmin's story

Yasmin is a psychodynamic psychotherapist working in private practise. She trained through the British Psychotherapy Foundation, and only finished her training a few years ago. She is around sixty years of age. She began by saying that theory was vital, 'because you don't have a therapy without the theory underpinning the therapy'. Throughout the interview Yasmin's enthusiasm for the topic and indeed for psychotherapy shone through.

01 For example

02 If I'm sitting with someone,

03 and this has happened recently

Orientation

04 I start feeling all of a sudden,	
05 I start feeling really scared.	CA
06 And this, this is a new patient	
07 and a man who um, has...	
08 he's actually quite furious about a lot of things.	Evaluation
09 I start feeling really scared	
10 and I start to notice this in myself.	CA
11 <i>Mmm.</i>	
12 And because of the theory of projective identification	
13 which comes into my mind.	
14 Right away, I go (<i>clicks fingers</i>),	
15 I understand something here.	
16 And then I can say to him,	
17 'I wonder if this feels very frightening to you',	
18 'Oh yes' he says.	CA
19 A big relief.	Resolution

Thematic analysis

Yasmin provides a story about how theory is central for her psychotherapeutic practice. She describes how theory allows her to understand what is going on for her patient and

enables her to act therapeutically. Theory is described as allowing a progression to be made from feeling (lines 4-10), to thinking about feeling (12-15).

Structural analysis

The narrative is organized in such a way that theory is presented as enabling understanding. Yasmin begins her narrative by providing a setting for the story: the consulting room. She then moves on to focusing on her own feelings of being scared, before attempting to describe her patient's feelings, something she appears more uncertain about. From line 12 the narrative picks up pace, reflecting how theory allows her to understand her patient. This increase in tempo, with its crescendo achieved through Yasmin clicking her fingers, and using monosyllabic words such as 'right' and 'here', provides a compelling sense of how theory may catalyse a transition from passivity to activity in the consulting room.

Dialogic/performance analysis

Yasmin presents a version of herself as a competent psychotherapist, able to interpret the patient's feelings meaningfully due to her understanding of theory. The researcher's 'Mmm' (line 11) serves as lubricant for Yasmin's narrative to continue apace, showing the researcher as understanding and validating the point she is making. The performance is convincing. Yasmin's use of direct speech (lines 17-18) adds authenticity to the narrative.

20 I can give you another example of that.

Abstract

21 When I was with a patient.

22 Um she's very depressed

23 and says she's been depressed for a very long time.

24 And she's having suicidal thoughts but no intention.

25 and she feels absolutely stuck with it.

Orientation

26 *Mmm.*

27 So there I was trying to say things like

28 'you want me to know how this feels'.

29 *To feel suicidal?*

30 Yeah., 'you're telling me,

31 what how this', yeah you know,

32 'you want me to know how this feels.'

33 'How depressed you feel.'

CA

34 And I thought well that's

35 that'll that'll, that's good.

Evaluation

36 And actually it didn't mean anything to her.

38 'Oh yeah sure, you know you can know, you can..'

39 No no she didn't say that.

40 She said something about

41 knowing me not understanding how she felt.

42 It didn't mean anything to her.

CA

43 And this went on for several session

44 and then I finally realised,

45 the very last session I was with her.

46 I thought you want me to bear this with you.

47 And it just came to me.

CA

48 But that is still part of the theory.

49 That would be Bion of being able to be the container

50 who bears the projections.

Evaluation

51 And she just started crying and

52 ...that did get something.

CA

53 And I didn't know that was it until it just came to me.

54 Right there.

Resolution

Thematic analysis

Yasmin describes how she did not feel able to say anything meaningful to her patient initially, but that over time she came to a realisation of what her client was asking from her. The narrative does not obviously seem to be about theory. Instead Yasmin seems to be telling a story about how she came, over time, to know how she could respond therapeutically to the patient. However, in line 48 this changes: 'but that would still be theory' as Yasmin appears to realise that her narrative can still be understood as being related to theory. Theory is not exactly the rescuer as seen in the previous segment, but

instead provides an understanding of the whole therapeutic process.

Structural analysis

Yasmin sets a scene in the consulting room again with another patient, anchoring the story as being based on genuine events. From lines 49-85 Yasmin speaks without any comment from the researcher. The style is hesitant, particularly through lines 38-41 where she meanders, correcting herself as she searches her memory. Her evaluation about Bion suggests that she regards theory as helping her when she feels confused.

Dialogic/Performance analysis

Despite her hesitancy, again Yasmin constructs herself as a psychotherapist who is able to respond meaningfully to her patient, although she also provides a sense of the difficulties she is experiencing in the session, and between lines 34-42 she presents herself as not knowing what to do. Theory, although not present in most of this section is eventually given importance. Yasmin realises that theory has helped her. Like the preceding segment, Yasmin ends this excerpt with her understanding being corroborated through the reaction of her patient, which adds authenticity to her narrative. However, it may be interpreted that because theory is lacking from most of her narrative, that there may be a disparity between Yasmin's views on theory and the role it plays in her practice. Theory may be less important to her than professed.

55 I'm very much in tune with

56 what I'm feeling when I'm with a patient.

57 In the sense of what is coming into me from the patient.

58 What is the projection?

59 *Uh-huh*

60 And that's...

61 *What's the countertransference?*

62 Yes....Yes Yes. That's part of it too.

64 Um, and I think the feelings are the start

65 of an ability to think.

66 And also to separate what my own feelings might be

67 from the patient's feelings.

Abstract

68 So if I have a countertransference that's quite strong and I'm thinking

69 'oh my goodness, what's this all about?'

70 And I start to think why this is, this is,

71 coming up with something in my in my life.

72 Or, it could be that along with what's being projected into me

73 my countertransference tells me something about

74 what this person experiences from other people

75 or, um what they might expect from other people.

CA

76 *Mmm.*

77 So I would think that's what I...

78 but I have to say it's not always clear in the room.

79 Haha.

Evaluation

80 *What do you mean it's not clear in the room?*

81 Well it's, you know sometimes I sit for a long time

82 thinking I don't know what is going on here.

83 I really don't know.

Orientation

84 And that is something else which is important which is

85 to be able to stay with not knowing,

86 and to stay with not um having...

87 Not knowing what to say...

CA

88 *Yeah*

89 Not knowing what's going on.

90 It can be a long time before something like that becomes clear.

91 And I, actually for me it's a process of keeping on learning.

92 Not to keep saying stuff

93 when I think 'oh I've got the answer to that'.

94 Um, but to, to understand,

95 that actually it's clear that I don't.

96 And it's clear that I don't know what's going on.

CA

97 And so the the theory then,
98 after a session where that might be prevalent,
99 I might be able to then think much more in theoretical terms
100 afterwards to think about what's happening between me and the patient.

Resolution

Thematic analysis

This section of the narrative provides an encapsulation of Yasmin's story about her approach to psychotherapy and the role that theory plays in it. Initially Yasmin describes how she uses a theoretical concept as a way of summarizing her approach to psychotherapeutic practice: 'what is the projection?' Yasmin then talks about feelings being very important to her way of working as a psychotherapist. However, these feelings are considered within the theoretical frame she is working in, and again Yasmin uses a theoretical concept, 'countertransference' to develop her narrative.

However we may note that despite the theoretical terms present here Yasmin is also attempting to describe the messy reality of practice. This is evident in her describing how she may stick with not knowing what is going on (line 89). In this case, the idea of not-knowing almost becomes a theoretical concept in its own right. As well as this, theory here is presented as something which may be used after the session to make sense of things.

Structural analysis

Between lines 89-96 Yasmin speaks in short sentences, with the style and delivery consistent with the content; that she does not know everything and she is engaged in a

process of learning. The slightly staccato structure of this part of the narrative helps to emphasise the step-by-step approach to her development that she is describing. What may also be noted is a potential disparity between theory and practice, in the sense of what Yasmin is describing and the conclusions she is drawing from them. For instance the complicating action (CA) in lines 68-75 appears to show how theory is playing a role in her work, but the ensuing evaluation (77-79) questions how important theory may actually be. It might be interpreted that actually the opposite is happening: in lines 84-96 Yasmin appears to be describing practice without theory playing an important role, before theory is brought in to resolve the narrative. In various ways, theory and practice appear somewhat disconnected in this narrative.

Dialogic/performance analysis

It seems that from line 61 both participants, in their roles as psychotherapists, co-construct a narrative which encourages a discussion of theory. In general here Yasmin does not present herself as the finished article. She is clear that she is still learning but appears to feel comfortable occupying this position. It is notable that the researcher and Yasmin both use theoretical terms perhaps as way of expressing membership of a psychotherapeutic club.

Summary

Yasmin describes theory in a number of ways in her story. In general it seems important to her. It allows her to think about her feelings, to make sense of them, and then to operate helpfully as a psychotherapist. Theory is presented as being a type of rescuer, but is also portrayed as something which allows a more macro-level understanding of the whole psychotherapeutic process. Theory is also described as something which may be used to

make sense of things after the psychotherapeutic session. In general, Yasmin does not provide a clear distinction between how she works herself personally and how she uses theory. The two are enmeshed. Structurally, Yasmin uses events from the consulting room as settings for her narratives, frequently providing a compelling recollection of events through the use of various narrative devices. In general she presents herself as a competent psychotherapist, providing insight into her clients' lives, but also is clear that she is still learning. Yasmin seems able to be comfortable with not-knowing, yet this comfort seems closely connected to making sense of things through theory at a later date.

5.5 Kevin's story

Kevin is an experienced psychotherapist who, at around fifty years of age, has written many published books and articles. Kevin's apparent confidence was a feature of the interview, and how he relished the chance to express some of his views on the importance of theory to his work.

01 My story is of having trained as a	
02 psychodrama psychotherapist over ten years	Abstract
03 And um learned psychodrama theory along the way.	CA
04 Which is all fine and dandy.	Evaluation
05 But that didn't mean reading Freud or Winnicott or Jung.	
06 or anyone really, except psychodramatists.	CA

07 *Right.*

08 So I finished my training as a, you know

09 reasonable psychodrama psychotherapist.

10 And then you know,

11 kind of taught myself theory from all these other people,

12 as I thought I was lacking...

CA

13 *Did you?*

14 Yeah.

15 *You thought you needed to away and learn some yourself.*

16 I did.

Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Kevin's training is one which was insufficient in his view in providing him with the theory that he desires. Theory appears important to Kevin, and that 'lacking' in theory was a problem for him which he needed to remedy. Freud, Winnicott and Jung appear representative of the psychotherapeutic establishment that Kevin wanted to join.

Structural Analysis

The narrative is structured as in such a way that Kevin presents himself with a problem

regarding the theoretical insufficiency of his initial training, and sets up the rest of the narrative as one which shows him as overcoming this difficulty.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Kevin immediately takes authorship of his story, positioning himself as a purveyor of narrative. He makes sense of himself within a literary framework, suggesting his preferred identity is one of story teller and author. Kevin then chooses to make his training central to his development of the protagonist, but describes psychodrama theory as lacking in substance (lines 5-6). Theory, for Kevin appears closely related to his individual desire, and allows him to demonstrate his capacity to learn.

17 I think my point about theory is that you can't work out what...

18 You can't articulate to yourself nevermind your supervisor

19 what you think it's really about, other than in theoretical terms. Abstract

20 You can't, you can't just say

21 'he needs to talk about his Dad' or 'he's very angry.'

22 I mean, that's a presenting, surfacey kind of thing. Evaluation

23 Internally, in terms of his unconscious world,

24 what's it really, what is it about?

25 His Dad, anger, or in terms of defences what is it that he's...

26 *You're getting into a theoretical language.*

27 And then you're getting into a theoretical language,
 28 and you need to have that language,
 29 as I say for yourself, apart from anyone else,
 30 in order to know what you think you're doing.
 31 Otherwise you're just fanning about, from session to session CA
 32 which is what a lot of people do. Evaluation
 33 You know there's some very badly trained people out there
 34 which again I've written about. Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Kevin presents theory as being fundamental to psychotherapeutic work. Theory appears to lead Kevin to ask himself the question 'what's it really, what's it about?' It also allows answers to this question, a way of making sense of the psychotherapy, and a way of going deeper rather than focusing on 'surfacey' things. To not regard theory as important, Kevin appears to be saying, is akin to 'just fanning around'.

Structural Analysis

The narrative includes all elements of Labov's definition of narrative although complicating actions are minimal. This may reflect the efforts of Kevin to crystallise his views on the importance of theory. The researcher attempts to reflect back what Kevin is saying (line 26) but perhaps leads Kevin to take a particular path in the narrative, to focus on a 'theoretical language'. The narrative then simplifies slightly, having a clearer structure, which reflect Kevin's somewhat forceful views on the function of theory.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Kevin again references himself as an author, reflecting his dual identity within the narrative. It is also addressed to the researcher and audience as it is phrased in the second person. The repetition of the word 'you' (adds a certain authority to the narrative. He is not one of the badly trained trained people whom he references, and whose thoughts and utterances he imitates (line 21). Kevin, now no longer lacking in theory as he was at the beginning of his story, speaks from his seemingly preferred identities as psychotherapist and author.

35 You know you might be thinking, um

36 this kid's really boring me.

37 I'm noticing that I'm being bored. What's this about?

Orientation

38 Is there... Klein says something about boring clients are...

39 it's an unconscious attack on the therapist.

Evaluation

40 So then I'm thinking is this person

41 actually much angrier than they're allowing themselves to be,

42 and their defence is just to be boring.

43 Because then I won't, I'll back off,

44 I won't be interested,

45 and then they'll be able to hide their anger.

46 And I'm thinking all that kind of....

CA

47 *Mmm.*

48 What's going on, but it's to do with knowing a bit of theory....

49 *Allows you to maybe think...*

51 Helping me to eventually push forward.

52 If someone's just being boring. or being an...

53 or if their defence is just to be sit and be angry, Evaluation

54 I need to hear all of that and decide where it needs to go. Resolution

Thematic Analysis

In this section Kevin expands upon how theory is important to him. He describes theory as allowing him to understand what needs to happen in psychotherapy, contrasting this with the previously mentioned 'fannyng about'. Kevin provides an example of this through describing Kleinian theory (lines 38-39) as a means of understanding what a client might be communicating to him. He describes his approach as benefiting from theory such as this and allowing him to make judgements about where the psychotherapy 'needs to go'. Theory here is seen as dynamic, allowing for movement and progress.

Structural Analysis

Kevin switches between first and second person narrative perspectives. The narrative again lacks distinct events, and so there is little complicating action. The setting is the consulting room but the situation didn't happen, it's all imagined. The narrative's

evaluative function however, helps to reaffirm Kevin's central point: that theory allows progress in the therapy. This evaluation is approached through asking a question to himself (line 37) which he then proceeds to answer. He also uses phrases such as 'so then' and 'push forward' as means of showing how dynamic he can be as a psychotherapist with a knowledge of theory, and which also helps to progress the narrative.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Kevin again appears to present himself as powerful, confident and competent. Theory seems to allow him to be this way. Kevin references Klein, showing familiarity with theory. Theory here may be seen as being important to Kevin in allowing him to practice confidently. The narrative, like the last segment, is evidently co-produced. The researcher's contribution (line 49) helps Kevin to expand upon his point, suggesting that Kevin regards the researcher as an audience who is responding positively to the relationship with theory that he is constructing.

Summary

Kevin appears to regard theory as hugely important. Theory for Kevin appears to give psychotherapy a purpose, and without theory psychotherapy may lack direction. It is the psychoanalytic 'club' which Kevin seems to want to join, and it is the person-centred approach which is the focus of his derision. Narratives are structured to allow Kevin to make his points articulately. He switches easily between dual roles of therapist and author. He is opinionated and does not seem to be worried about being perceived as controversial. In this sense, theory seems important not just to his work as a psychotherapist but also for his identity as an author.

5.6 Eva's story

Eva is a recently qualified psychotherapist working in private practice. She trained as a Transactional Analysis (TA) Psychotherapist at the Berne Institute. She is estimated to be in her sixties.

01 When I first started

02 I didn't have that much theory.

Orientation

03 I think I may have started after a year or two.

04 Um, and so I didn't, it felt like I

05 was doing it on a wing and a prayer.

CA

06 A common type of thing.

Evaluation

07 And sometimes I feel

08 it's what I feel I'm doing because

09 I'm not consciously thinking about theory.

CA

10 But it's there, so the theory has formed me

11 and my way of thinking for years.

Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Eva describes how without theory she felt like she didn't know how to practice. She remembers feeling at a loss, but quickly normalises that feeling (line 6). Thematically we

see how theory appears associated with therapeutic competence. Good practise is not felt to be possible without theory. Also, Eva is describing how theory has become part of her, and so she now uses it unknowingly.

Structural Analysis

This temporally ordered narrative begins with her recalling first practising as a therapist, before moving back to the present. This change in time initially contrasts with the constancy of her feeling that she's practising 'on a wing and a prayer'. However, the narrative resolves itself (lines 10-11) with Eva's realisation that theory has 'formed' her and her thinking, suggesting that there has actually been a development in her practice to match that passing of time.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Eva twice appears to console herself in this narrative, firstly through the afore mentioned normalisation (line 6) where she talks about the anxiety that trainees feel when they practice for the first time; and secondly with the realisation that theory helps her when she feels as she did when she first began practising (line 10). It is from this that we may infer that Eva wants to show that she has 'absorbed' the theory she has learned. In this sense, theory seems to be portrayed as something which reduces therapeutic anxiety.

12 I think partly because it's [theory's] been absorbed
13 and partly because, um with each client,
14 each client is an illustration of some of these things,
15 you start recognising patterns.
16 And you know, even with being careful.

17 Each person is very different.

18 There are things which come up again and again, um yeah....

CA

19 *There are things which come up again and again.*

20 Mmm.

21 *Is that what you mean?*

22 *That it can help you make that kind of jump?*

23 I think it, I think that's what it does.

24 It means that I, um seem to kind of fast forward

25 without going through each individual step of theory.

Evaluation

26 It's a bit like these people who are good at mental arithmetic.

27 They've got these kind of short cuts instead of

28 you know, counting everything with their fingers.

Resolution

Thematic Analysis

Eva describes how theory, as absorbed by the therapist, acts as a short-cut in therapy, a way of making sense of things more quickly. As in the last segment, theory is inseparable from Eva. Theory is not external to her, it has been 'absorbed'. The fact that it has been absorbed allows Eva to see 'patterns' and to 'fast forward'.

Structural Analysis

Eva uses a metaphor of mental arithmetic to help make her point clearer in this narrative. However, her use of the word 'careful' (line 16) seems to both encapsulate her narrative style and adds authenticity to the narrative.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

This narrative is heavily co-constructed with the researcher's question about whether theory helps Eva to 'make that kind of jump' directing the rest of the narrative segment. Eva and the researcher can be seen here to co-author a story of theory as allowing Eva therapeutic 'short-cuts'. This idea lends itself to the analogy of learning psychotherapeutic theory being like learning Maths: it can initially involve pain-staking step-by-step calculations, but with practise steps can be bypassed.

29 Someone I'm seeing,

30 yeah I think he's a policeman.

Orientation

31 He's really worried about an allegation that's been made against him,

32 and his colleagues are reassuring him that there's no evidence

33 so he doesn't need to be

34 but he's consumed with, with worry.

35 So my first instinct was to ask myself,

36 you know 'what's happened to you in the past

37 that's made the world feel so unsafe

38 that you can't be reassured?'

CA

39 So that would be theory because it would be...

Thematic Analysis

Eva's point about theory being absorbed into her practice is reiterated here. She talks about her 'first instinct' (line 35), but says that these instincts cannot be separated from theory. As she concludes her story, she explicitly mentions theory for the first time. However, she somewhat falters here (line 39), and cannot convincingly articulate how her theory is relevant here. She tails off before stating 'we would call it script'.

Structural Analysis

This simple event-focused narrative attempts to support Eva's point about her absorbing theory. The narrative is resolved with linking previous events to theory. However, it is perhaps questionable how well the narrative functions as serving this type of conclusion.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

It is in Eva's attempt to describe the role of theory in her work that she uses 'we' to construct her identity as belonging within a particular group of TA psychotherapists. One can imagine how constructing her identity in this way may alleviate some of the anxiety that Eva described previously about practising on a 'wing and a prayer'.

Summary

Eva talks of how theory has become part of her and absorbed within her. Theory is also presented as allowing therapeutic short-cuts to be made. The narratives are heavily co-constructed, and Eva positions herself as belonging to the psychotherapeutic group she did her training with.

5.7 Overall findings

Although narrative analysis takes as its focus “extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units” (Riessman, 2008: 12), participants' stories may also “generate “categories”.... knowledge about general aspects of social organization” (Riessman, 2008: 13). These categories, which are henceforth also referred to as 'themes', or 'concepts', are presented below.

Theory as so important it cannot be separated from the individual

Two participants (Eleanor and Eva) provided similar stories of theory being very important to them, yet at the same time, appearing unable to describe exactly *how* theory was important to them. This appears to be the case when Eleanor describes theory as 'everything,....almost like it runs through my veins', and what Eva means when she describes theory as having 'formed me'. Theory, in this sense, seems to be experienced as intensely personal. It cannot be separated from the individual.

This category is given depth by Yasmin who talks of theory allowing her to think. In her story, there is no easy separation between theory and her own thoughts and feelings. Theory here is seen as almost an intermediary, allowing a progression from feelings to thinking. Again theory is not presented as something to be deployed. Rather, it is regarded as inextricably linked and enmeshed with the experience of the psychotherapist.

Theory as being selected and used

Perhaps contrasting with the concept above is the idea of theory being presented in

narratives as something which can be selected and used by the narrator/psychotherapist. Annette talks of how she may use certain theories depending on the client she is seeing. Theories are 'just hypotheses'. They can be employed or not depending on how helpful they are. This theme is also apparent in Alice's story.

Participants structure their narratives accordingly. The word 'use' in relation to theory comes up in Alice's, Eleanor's and Annette's narratives. Attention to this word reveals that theory can be thought of as being something similar to a tool, and as something which is applied by the psychotherapist.

Theory as allowing thought/action, and providing psychotherapy with cohesion/direction

Yasmin's descriptions of the role theory plays in her work with clients not only reveals how theory is experienced as something personal to her, but also how it can help her to make sense of things. She constructs a story where feelings are able to be brought into consciousness thanks to theory. Her setting of narratives in the consulting room adds authenticity to her story. Kevin's story includes a similar idea, although for him, theory was described as leading more to action rather than facilitating thought. Kevin seems to be suggesting that theory allows him to decide where the session 'needs to go'. Eva uses a metaphor of 'mental arithmetic' to stand for theory. She talks of how once practitioners have learned theory it is like they are good at maths and no longer need to 'count on their fingers'. Eva's use of this metaphor helps to reinforce the point she is making: that theory acts like a therapeutic short-cut. Theory here is regarded as important in giving therapy the means of progressing. Furthermore, Yasmin describes herself as asking 'what is the projection?' throughout the psychotherapeutic session. Theory here is presented as providing purpose and point, to what otherwise for Kevin, would just be 'fannyng about',

or for Eleanor, as being 'too wishy-washy'. The psychotherapist in this category is constructed as one which weighs up the words of the client and with theory in mind, decides what to do.

Theory as being less important in psychotherapeutic practice

However, participants' stories did not always show theory as axiomatic to psychotherapy. Annette's story presents her use of theory as flexible. Theory may be used, or it may not be. One theory may be helpful at certain times; another on a different occasion. Theory here is regarded, if not unimportant, then certainly as less important to the psychotherapist's work with clients. For Annette theory was shown as a hypothesis or a lens, and not a truth. Alice, in her attempt to describe how theory was important to her, actually provides a narrative which may be interpreted as giving theory a less prominent role. What comes to the fore in her story is the value of intuition and instinct in her psychotherapeutic work with clients, features of psychotherapeutic practice which appear relatively lacking in theory.

Theory as a language

Annette's narrative provided another meaning for theory, showing it as a 'common language' that may be negotiated between psychotherapist and patient. Theory here is regarded as important insofar as it facilitates a meaningful conversation between psychotherapist and client. This theme of language was also present in Kevin's narrative but in a different fashion. For Kevin, a more private theoretical language allows a psychotherapist to make sense of their task, and without it, they are left floundering.

Theory may also be regarded as allowing a common language to be found between

researcher and participant. Whilst all interviews were dialogically co-produced, some were more obviously collaborative than others. For instance, the researcher can be interpreted as colluding with Yasmin to encourage a theoretically imbued narrative of her approach to psychotherapy. Likewise, with Eva, her metaphor of mental arithmetic is extended by the researcher, helping to shape the narrative. Generally it appears that narratives are often co-constructed through the use of theoretical terms and concepts. Both researcher and narrators may be understood as constructing their relationships to theory through conversation.

Theory as providing respite from therapists' anxiety

A further category that emerged from participants' narratives was that of theory relating to participants' own anxieties. Eleanor provides a story in which theory has a role of helping her when she does not know what to do with a client. Theory is described as a sanctuary, and as something she can lean on. Yasmin says something similar. She describes a therapeutic session in which she does not know what to do, until theory helps her to realise something. To return to Eleanor, it was also the idea of talking about theory which caused anxiety. Providing a story about theory created its own pressures.

Theory as being separate from practice

Some narratives may be interpreted as suggesting that there is more of a disparity between theory and practice than the narrator suggests there to be. This is evident in some discrepancies between the complicating action in participants' stories and the way these narratives are evaluated and resolved. This point may also be evident in the tendency for participants to attempt to limit ambiguity so that the researcher cannot be mistaken about the point of the narrative. Eva does this when she describes how she works and then says

how her description should be evidence of theory operating. Alice, meanwhile, seemingly describes how theory is important to her practice yet close attention to her narrative reveals that actually her practice may be less theory driven than she thinks. The same can perhaps be said for Yasmin. Her admission that 'it's not always clear in the room' is suggestive that her psychotherapeutic practice does not always relate to theory easily. Indeed, theory may be presented as having an *ad hoc* function, allowing Yasmin to make sense after the session of what occurred during it.

Theory as indicator of professional competence

Participants' stories appeared to frequently equate the narrators' theoretical understandings with positioning themselves as professionally competent protagonists within their narratives. It seemed that participants wished to construct identities which demonstrated knowledge about theory. For instance, Alice's description of the Cognitive-Analytic Therapy (CAT) approach was suggestive of her wishing to present herself as knowledgeable to the researcher. Yasmin also used theory in her story to show herself as capable within the psychotherapeutic setting. There is a sense that the reverse could be true; that without theory psychotherapists would be regarded as less competent. This appeared to create some anxiety in Eleanor's case. 'I was worried I'd be a let down', she told the researcher, and Kevin talks of how he was lacking before he taught himself theory. Throughout the interviews, participants wanted to talk about how they used theory and how they understood it. In this way, the importance of theory may be understood as being closely linked to professional competency.

Theory as allowing membership of a group and being a former of identity

Theory may also be seen as being tied closely with identity, both in terms of belonging to

a psychotherapeutic community and being related to the individual constructing and performing a particular 'self' when conveying their different narratives. In terms of belonging to a group, Eva says that 'we would call it script' in her story, indicating that she is speaking from a Transactional Analyst's (TA) perspective. It appears that the use of the 'we' is important to her in the way that she identifies herself within her narrative, and she seems to take comfort in positioning herself as belonging to such a group. Kevin begins his story by describing how his initial training lacked 'Freud or Winnicott or Jung' and how he went away to read them, suggesting that he, in a way, wanted to join a group that valued these theorists. The question of identity also explicitly occurs for Eleanor, who talks about a knowledge of theory as being the difference between psychotherapy and counselling. In doing she makes it clear that she is a member of the first group.

Participants also differ in the way they perform as versions of themselves in their narratives, and how theory relates to this. Kevin switches between identities of psychotherapist and author. The latter appears associated with his desire to describe his approach in theoretical detail. In doing so, the researcher is placed in the position of student. Something similar happens with Alice in her description of theory. In this instance, teaching theory seems closely linked to being experienced.

This chapter has presented the narrative analysis of the participant interviews and attempted to summarise the overall findings of the research. The focus now will turn to discussion of these findings. Important questions include: how do they compare to the literature presented earlier? What can they contribute to knowledge? Possible implications of the findings for both future research and practice will also be considered.

The following chapter will initially discuss the findings of the narrative analysis with respect to the questions raised in the introduction (chapter one), and then in relation to the literature review (chapter two). Which literature do the narrative findings support, and which do they challenge? The discussion will then turn to what the findings may have contributed to knowledge within the field of psychotherapy. Lastly, the implications of the study for both future research, and for psychotherapeutic practice, will be discussed.

6.1 The Findings and the Introduction

The introduction presented three questions that pertain to investigating what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory to their work with clients:

1. How important is theory important in psychotherapy? Do psychotherapists consider theory to be foundational, in that it is fundamental to their psychotherapeutic practice, or is it not so important?
2. When is theory important in psychotherapy? What may increase or decrease the importance that psychotherapists ascribe to theory?

Through exploring these two questions a third question was also considered:

3. In what ways is theory important in psychotherapy? How do psychotherapists make use of theory? How might the relationships that psychotherapists have with theory be talked

about?

In response to these three questions, the main narrative findings can be summarised as follows:

1. The findings generally suggest that theory is important in psychotherapy and to psychotherapists in their practice.

Some participants, (Eva, Yasmin and Eleanor) provided stories that presented theory as inseparable from their own selves. The tendency for participants to do this led to the formulation of the category: *Theory as so important it cannot be separated from the individual*. In these narratives there was often little differentiation between what may be regarded as personal and what was regarded as theory. Narrators also described theory as playing a formative role in the development of themselves as psychotherapists. Taken as a whole, these narratives were suggestive of theory being important to psychotherapists and to psychotherapy.

However, not all participants gave theory such importance within their narratives, or throughout their narratives, which led to the theme: *Theory as less important in psychotherapy*. Annette in particular, talked of how theory could only ever be a 'possibility'. Whilst the narratives in general suggest that theory appears to be important to psychotherapists in their work with clients, it cannot be assumed that all psychotherapists regard theory as foundational (in the sense that their practice is based upon it) and as fundamental to their work.

Some narratives do suggest that theory can be foundational to psychotherapeutic practice. The category that pertains to this most is *Theory as allowing thought/action, and providing psychotherapy with cohesion/direction*. This finding describes how narrators present theory as not only providing the means for 'progression' in sessions, but also as way of making sense of the entire enterprise. For instance, 'what is the projection?' is the question that Yasmin described herself as continually asking. Her construction of a story in which theory is foundational to her practice is summarised by her dictum: 'there can be no therapy without theory'. Kevin's story showed theory as foundational in that it allows the psychotherapist to direct the therapy, 'to decide where it needs to go'. Again it was Annette who provided a different sense of theory in her narrative. Theory cannot be considered foundational for her, in that it is only a 'possibility' or a 'hypothesis'.

2. Narratives provides some answers to the question about when psychotherapists may regard theory as important.

Some narratives revealed *Theory as providing respite from therapists' anxiety*. Eleanor in particular talked of how theory could support her when she felt uncertain and worried. Theory was described as both a crutch and a refuge, and in doing so, given an important role in her story. This category was also evident in Yasmin's story, who evaluated one segment of her narrative with a recollection of the relief she experienced after theory had allowed her to respond to her patient meaningfully. The understanding of anxiety being important in psychotherapists' relationships to theory is also evident in the formulation of the concept, *Theory as indicator of professional competence*, which pertained to the propensity of participants to use their knowledge of theory to position themselves as professionally competent protagonists within their narratives.

The findings also suggest that the importance of theory to psychotherapists may be altered by the type of patient they are working with. Annette talked of finding a 'common language' with her patients. Additionally, the setting in which the psychotherapist is working may affect how they relate to theory. Alice's descriptions of the theory used in her work in primary care suggests that she was more comfortable using a structured theoretically-driven approach in this setting of shorter term work.

3. Material pertaining to the relationship psychotherapists have with theory, and the role and function of theory, is evident throughout participants' stories. In general, the findings suggest that the relationships psychotherapists have with theory may be considered as complex and multifarious. Inconsistencies and confusions between (and even within, for instance Eleanor's story) participants' narratives were identified. For instance, theory may be regarded as very personal to some participants, presented in their narratives as absorbed and 'within' them (as evident in the category *Theory as so important it cannot be separated from the individual*), whilst for others theory appeared something to be applied, suggesting they take more of an external relation to it (*Theory as being selected and used*). In general, it was apparent that psychotherapists' construct and reconstruct their relationships to theory through conversation, (*Theory as a language*), with the researcher a vital component of this process.

Narratives may be interpreted as illuminating aspects of relationships that psychotherapists may have with theory. For some participants it seemed important to position themselves as narrators who are able to communicate theoretical knowledge to the researcher. Theory, here conceptualized as an *indicator of professional competence*, appeared to provide

participants with credibility as psychotherapists (and as narrators). Similarly, narrative analysis revealed how participants appear to either include or exclude themselves from various groups within psychotherapy in their stories. Theory here appears closely tied to notions of belonging and identity: *Theory as allowing membership of a group and being a former of identity.*

6.2 The Findings and the Literature

The ways in which the findings compare and contrast to the literature will now be discussed using a similar structure to that of chapter two.

Views of theory

The narrative findings provide some support for both views of theory that were presented in the literature review. It appeared that theory could be viewed by participants as either an explanatory account similar to those found in the physical sciences (e.g., Freud 1925/1989; Rogers 1959); or as a means of aiding understanding whilst not making claims on truth (e.g. Rycroft, 1985; Spence, 1982) .

Narratives which pertain to the categories of *Theory as being selected and used* and *Theory as less important* may be understood as primarily supporting a more interpretive view of theory rather than an explanatory one. Annette told a story in which she appeared to have a pragmatic relationship with theory (e.g. Fishman, 1989). Theory, in this sense, seemed to have the role of helping her make sense of things, rather than representing a necessary truth that she could not do without.

Narratives comprising the theme *Theory as so important it cannot be separated from the individual*, however, may be understood as providing support for a more scientific-explanatory view of theory. Narratives here showed theory to be so important that it may be thought of as being indistinguishable from reality, and that these participants might not be able to detach themselves sufficiently from theory to be able to critically examine their relationship to it. They could not remove the lens, as it were, and so their reality was no different from that explained by the theory.

How important is theory in psychotherapy?

Narratives comprising the category *Theory as allowing membership of a group and being a former of identity* may be regarded as presenting a challenge to literature valuing the importance of non-modality specific, and theoretically eclectic factors in psychotherapy (Frank, 1974; Norcross, 1986; Strupp, 1989; Wampold 2001). They challenge this literature through illuminating the tendency for psychotherapists to construct their identities in relation to theory-specific schools of psychotherapy. Examples include Eva's positioning of herself within the TA community, and Kevin's implied desire to be identified as psychodynamically oriented. Yasmin's question, 'what is the projection?' also suggests how she appears to construct her identity and then her primary task as a psychotherapist within a Kleinian object-relations framework.

Theory as important in psychotherapy

The findings generally support the literature presented in chapter two that suggests theory is important in psychotherapy through explorations of features of psychotherapy which appear heavily theorized.

Theory as the dominant discourse

The results suggest that theoretical discourses are prevalent in descriptions of psychotherapy. Karasu's (1986) and McLeod's (1997) remarks on the proliferation of psychotherapeutic theories are to some extent reinforced through the prevalence of theoretical discourse throughout the narratives.

The concept *Theory as a language* is relevant here. This theme attempted to encapsulate not only participants' tendencies to describe how theoretical language informed their practice and ways of thinking as psychotherapists, but also how researcher and participant co-constructed theoretically imbued narratives.

For instance, in Annette's story she describes her objective as finding a 'common language' with the client, with theory presented as allowing her to both speak and hear different languages. Kevin talks of how language is needed for the psychotherapist to make sense of their work to themselves. Theoretical language also plays an important role in the construction of narratives between researcher and participant, with the researcher seen as contributing to the active construction of the relationships that participants may have with theory. The researcher's use of theoretical concepts perhaps reflects the propensity for psychotherapy to be talked of in theoretical terms (e.g. Ryle 1978).

The prevalence of theoretical discourse in participants' stories also appears related to the category *Theory as an indicator of psychotherapeutic competence*. That participants tended to use theoretical discourse in their narratives to tell the researcher about the theories they used seemed in accordance with their tendency to position themselves within their stories as competent psychotherapists. In other words, it was as if knowing these

theories and being able to talk about them was analogous to being competent as a psychotherapist.

Theory as important within the medical paradigm

The narrative findings may be interpreted as having some relevance to the idea of a psychotherapist working within a medical paradigm, which was argued as being a feature of a theoretically-driven approach to psychotherapy, although narratives did not indicate that psychotherapists may predicate the success or otherwise of their therapeutic work upon theory-specific factors (e.g. Klein, 1952, 1956; Sandler & Dreher, 1996).

The most relevant aspect of the findings were participants' narratives which formed the theme *Theory as allowing thought/action, and providing psychotherapy with cohesion/direction*. Narratives here demonstrated theory as allowing them to make sense of their overall endeavour. Whilst narrators did not overtly reference a medical paradigm, they did talk of being directive in their approach to psychotherapy. Kevin described theory in his narrative as allowing him to 'hear all of that and decide where it needs to go', and similarly, Eva's metaphor of mental arithmetic hints at how theory may provide the basis for 'movement' in psychotherapy.

Annette, although describing her tentative use of theory through likening it to a hypothesis, appears to also inadvertently reveal how she may be caught up in a scientific or medical paradigm. For in making a hypothesis, Annette is arguably also making a diagnosis, and may lead her to a certain understanding of what needs to be done by the psychotherapist to bring about a certain outcome.

Psychotherapy as applied theory

Participants' stories provide some support for the notion of psychotherapeutic practice being regarded as applied psychotherapeutic theory. However, Singer's assertion that psychotherapists should subscribe to the view that "modifications both of theory and practice must reflect the most recent findings of empirical research" (1980: 372), as well as the views of Paul (1967), are not reinforced by the results. Narrators did not explicitly relate theory to empirical research, and so the research-practice gap initially reported by Morrow-Bradley and Elliott (1986) appears supported.

However, the close links between theory and practice - evident in the views of Eysenck (1970) and Berger (1980) who emphasize the importance of the progression from research-to-theory-to-practice - are perhaps more evident in the findings. As in the discussion above regarding the medical paradigm, it is narratives that form the category *Theory as allowing thought/action, and providing psychotherapy with cohesion/direction* which best illustrate how psychotherapeutic practice can be regarded as applied theory. Participants' stories in this theme present theory as something which is fundamental and foundational to their practice, and which provides dynamism in the consulting room.

Theory as less important to psychotherapy

Whilst the narrative analysis suggested that psychotherapists regard theory as important to their work with clients, there is also some support for what were argued to be less-theorised aspects of psychotherapy as also being important in the work of psychotherapists.

Not-knowing and waiting

Bion's (1962) thoughts on the importance of 'not-knowing' was supported by some of the findings. Narratives comprising the theme *Theory as being separate from practice* include Yasmin's story of how she may not know what to say to one of her patients, and the ensuing confusion and helplessness that she felt. Theory is portrayed in the narrative as having a *ad hoc* function, with Yasmin describing how theory allows her to make sense of things at a later date. However, theory appears largely absent from Yasmin's description of the actual session, and the narrative action instead focuses on the protagonist's ability to be able to cope with not-knowing. It is also in this narrative where the views of Winnicott (1971) on the value of waiting also seem relevant: theory may be thought about and discussed later, but in the actual development of the psychotherapeutic session, it seems to play a less pivotal role, with the focus instead being more on waiting for meaning to emerge 'naturally', rather than it being prematurely engineered through the use of theory.

Ethics

The findings appear to provide some support for the importance of an ethical relationship taking precedence over any theory in psychotherapy. Included in the category *Theory as being less important in psychotherapeutic practice* is much of Annette's story, where she provides a narrative in which theory plays a less important role, with the client she is with instead dictating the way that she works. 'The way they express themselves to me kind of suggests to me what might be a useful approach to take'. Theory here is considered subservient to the patient and does not take precedence, something which corresponds to the views expressed by Levinas (1981) and Gordon (1999). Annette's narrative also, then appears in support of Loewenthal's (2011) conception of post-existentialism.

Original thought & Spontaneity

Narratives only provided partial support for literature (Bion, 1962; Winnicott, 1971) detailing these arguably less theorised features of psychotherapy.

Participants' narratives which show most support for this literature are found within the theme *Theory as being less important in psychotherapeutic practice*, and specifically within Alice's story. In her narrative she attempts to describe how her work with dreams is of importance to her. Whilst dreams are an important part of the psychoanalytic canon her narrative also appears to describe the importance of instinctual and personal aspects of psychotherapy. She remarks that dreams can be helpful 'as it's very empowering because that's your inside telling you things'. It appears that she may not only be commenting on the usefulness for the client of attempting to understand their dreams; but also on the value of more intuitive aspects of her work. Here Alice appeared most authentic, perhaps approaching something similar to Winnicott's (1971) description of the true self. Otherwise, there was little support for for these features of psychotherapy, with Bion's (1962) notion of reverie seemingly absent from participants' narrative.

Questioning the importance of theory: Wittgenstein

The findings go some way to supporting the interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy provided in chapter two, in which it was argued that Wittgenstein (1958) illustrates our failure to adequately attend to the specific socially contextualised ways in which we learn language (and are inducted into other cultural practices), and instead tend to give undue importance to theories about the internal contents of individuals' minds.

This interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought is evident throughout the narratives, where participants use language in a multiplicity of ways, and so it cannot be assumed that the

words signify the same thing (the discussion of post-structuralism in chapter three is also applicable here). Therefore Wittgenstein's critique of the 'mentalese' account provided by Fodor (1975) appears valid. An example of this is the different 'language-games' that the term 'theory' appears to be involved in. For instance in Eleanor's story, the term 'theory' was used in what appeared to be a variety of ways. Theory was 'everything'; it ran 'through her veins'; referred to as what was happening when psychotherapists were 'sitting around and talking'; 'a sanctuary' to retreat to, and a crutch to 'lean on'. The myriad of contexts in which theory is mentioned here may be interpreted as evidence for the importance of a view of language in which "a word's meaning is its place within a language game, against the background of human life" (Heaton, 2014: 71), and makes us question how we can be certain that we are all meaning the same thing when we use certain terms, in this case theory.

Theory may also be thought of as being its own language game, involved in elevating a certain type of discourse above others. Wittgenstein's later philosophy suggests that the prominence of theoretical language in narratives may be indicative of the fact that psychotherapists have been inducted into a culture which values this sort of language.

To remind the reader, Wittgenstein regarded the reification of certain psychological concepts as problematic, in that they may lead us astray from the more initial contexts and language-games that these words came from. Wittgenstein said that this limits our understanding: "a main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words" (1958: 49, italics in original). The use of theoretical concepts is evident in the narratives comprising the theme *Theory as a language*. Analysis of these stories suggests that both researcher and participant may co-construct narratives

through using theoretical terms. Co-constructed narratives of this type show how theory may be seized upon by both participants as a means of developing a story of shared meaning, and who both appear at times to use these theoretical concepts more willingly than more 'normal' language. It could be interpreted from this that psychotherapists, when speaking to one another, are initiated into a theoretical language-game, and that this language-game is given precedence over other language-games which may encompass more 'normal' language.

It is also interesting to question how much something similar may happen between psychotherapist and patient. Narratives within the category *Theory as a language* may also be interpreted as examples of the tendency for psychotherapists to impose a type of language-game on their clients which privileges certain theoretical concepts over others, and also over less theoretically-imbued language. Findings of this type could be construed as evidence for psychotherapists fetishising certain concepts, and in doing so losing touch with more normal language, with the associated risk of meaning becoming diminished. "The loosening of the bond between the living being and her language, leads to language becoming more and more vain" (Heaton, 2014: 47).

The findings also show how participants have the tendency to generalise and to value the theoretical over the more contextually-bound. This is perhaps most evident in narratives included in the category *Theory as being separate from practice*. Stories comprising this theme demonstrate how participants may evaluate and resolve their narratives as being about theory, although the complicating action comprising the bulk of these stories actually appeared relatively free of theory. Yasmin resolved one of her narratives by stating 'but that would still be theory'. That she does this may be argued as being

symptomatic of psychotherapists' willingness to swiftly change from talking about the specifics of their practice to describing the generalised abstractions of theory.

Other narratives support the view that there may be a disparity between the way we do things (practice) and the accounts we give for them (theory) (e.g., Budd, 1989). Alice began her narrative by saying how theory is important to her work with clients, but close attention to her words reveals that actually her practice seems more founded on arguably less theoretically-imbued values such as authenticity and intuition. Yasmin provided a story of how theory may be important to her, and initially created a setting for her narrative in which countertransference and projection had central roles. However, she then proceeded to describe how she may have to tolerate large periods of uncertainty, something which may be interpreted as showing her practice as being less theory-driven than initially claimed. There seemed a disconnection between the important role that Yasmin claimed theory played in her work, and the role it appeared to have through her description of her practice. Narrative findings of this kind suggest Wittgenstein's thought to be relevant when considering psychotherapists' relationships to theory.

When is theory important in psychotherapy?

As participants did not refer to the psychoanalytic concept of interpretation in their narratives, the findings may be understood as challenging literature that suggests interpretation to be vital (e.g., Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988), and instead, as possibly supporting the sentiments of Friedman that “we are disenchanted with interpretations” (2002: 540). Despite this, the findings may be understood as providing support for the literature presented in chapter two which suggested that that theory may become more important to psychotherapists because of their own anxiety. This literature includes Britton

and Steiner, who opine, in relation to Bion (1962), that if “the analyst is unable to tolerate the uncertainty of not understanding he may turn to his theory as a source of reassurance and look for a patient to act as a container for the theory” (1994: 1075). Similar warnings - such as Pareja's (1986) and Carnochan's (2004) - of the tendency for psychotherapists to provide interpretations (which are based on psychoanalytic theory) because of an intolerance of their own anxiety, also appear justified by some of the narratives provided in this research.

Narratives encompassing the concept *Theory as providing respite from anxiety* are relevant to the afore mentioned literature, and it is Eleanor's story which is especially germane. Eleanor talks of theory as a place for her to retreat to: 'when something is too much, that's where I go'. The anxiety, seemingly described here is produced by difficulties in a session, and which leads to a tendency to turn to theory, may also relate to another anxiety about theory: Eleanor was also concerned about whether she knew theory well enough to be able to be a 'good' interviewee. This second anxiety was presented earlier as pertaining to the category *Theory as an indicator of professional competence*, and so to the general idea of how narrators may construct their identities through story-telling.

The point being made here is that the anxiety experienced by Eleanor through her experiences of difficulties in psychotherapeutic practice appears related to the construction of her identity as a psychotherapist. Her narrative suggests that not only does her anxiety lead her to place more importance on theory, but that her identity as a competent psychotherapist is also closely linked to a grasp of theory. In other words, Eleanor's story suggests that when things are difficult in practice her very identity is threatened. The anxiety that is produced by uncertainty in the psychotherapeutic session may lead to a

“retreat behind entrenched psychologized theoretical positions” (Cotton & Loewenthal, 2011: 87) and which relate to a desire to show oneself as professionally competent. This finding is perhaps unsurprising, but was not found to be explicated fully in the literature reviewed. If a psychotherapist defines her competence through her familiarity with theory, and it is argued that participants show that they do, then it is perhaps inevitable that when this construction of identity is threatened they may be quick to turn to theory in a bid to reassemble this identity construction. Correspondingly, we may assume that when psychotherapists do not construct their identity as being so closely related to theory, then they may react to anxiety in a different fashion, which may be more in their patients' interests (e.g. Rustin, 2001) and less about their own professional standing. This appears an important contribution to the debate about theory and how it relates to psychotherapeutic practice.

This concludes how the narrative findings relate to the literature reviewed in chapter two. The discussion will now turn to the contribution to knowledge that the research has made.

6.3 Contribution to knowledge

The research contributes to knowledge through providing an exploration of the nature of the inter-relationships between language, identity, and (theoretical) knowledge within psychotherapy. The research contributes to psychotherapeutic literature by using a narrative approach to offer insight into how psychotherapists may discursively construct their identities and their relationships to theory and knowledge. Specifically the study shows how these relationships to theory are invariably complex, as they are constructed interpersonally, and are continually modified. As Riessman says, “we are forever

composing impressions of ourselves, projecting a definition of who we are, and making claims about ourselves and the world that we test out and negotiate with others” (2008: 106).

The research then reveals how psychotherapists' relationships to theory may be understood as being negotiated (and renegotiated) socially. This idea shares many similarities with Wittgenstein's (1958) understanding of language-learning as a socially-governed activity, and so also contributes to knowledge through building on Heaton's (2010; 2014) work on the application of Wittgenstein's philosophy to psychotherapy.

To further consider this contribution in terms of Wittgenstein, psychotherapists appear readily initiated into various language-games which involve theory, and actively develop these language-games through the co-production of narratives. Psychotherapists' relationships to theory are developed and modified discursively, and so the research may be regarded as questioning the prevalence of the visual metaphor of theory discussed earlier.

This understanding contributes to knowledge by questioning, the perhaps conventional understanding, of theory being something which a psychotherapist may learn privately prior to applying it in practice. In other words, it challenges the scientific-medical paradigm that was presented in chapter two as being indicative of a theory-driven approach to psychotherapy. Instead, the role of theory in psychotherapy cannot easily be defined as it is through negotiation with others that its importance or otherwise to psychotherapists is developed. Psychotherapists do not have static relationships to theory; something evident in the multiple relationships to theory seen in the findings of the

research.

This contribution relates not only to the work of Wittgenstein (1958) but also to that of Gadamer (1975) who believed *theoria* to be a form of *praxis*. This idea is in contrast to the definition of theory presented earlier as “knowledge or statement of the facts on which it depends... as distinguished from the *practice* of it” (OED, 1989: 902, italics in original). Instead, the study may question the typical theory-practice dichotomy through supporting Gadamer's view that “theory is a way of acting, living, and being there with and through others” (Di Cesare, 2007: 115).

6.4 Implications for practice and future research

Implications for practice

The research questions the scientific and medical paradigm's view of the application of theory to practice in favour of a more complex understanding of the role of theory in psychotherapeutic practice. The research suggests a re-evaluation of psychotherapy as being regarded as quasi-scientific enterprise into something which is happy to be thought of as cultural activity. This understanding would perhaps enable various theories, some of which do not fit easily into parameters imposed by the scientific-medical paradigm, to compete for utility and space within psychotherapeutic discourse and practice.

The research suggests that the practice of psychotherapy need not necessarily be based on prior knowledge of theory of psychotherapy, and a greater importance would be given to the complex interaction between theory and practice in psychotherapy. The findings suggest that psychotherapists construct their relationships to theory through conversation

with others, and in doing so show how complex and changeable these relationships to theory may be. When relationships have the power to construct and change identities we should perhaps be wary of adopting an over theory-driven approach.

Perhaps what also may be considered as an implication for practice from the findings is the value of learning from one's experience. Overall, the findings may question basing psychotherapeutic practice upon theory. Learning from one's own experience, and privileging that above theory, as it were, has much in common with a phenomenological approach to psychotherapy (e.g., Loewenthal, 2011). What also appears important is the opportunity for psychotherapists to be able to talk about their practice and the theories that inform it. If theories are regarded as being negotiated and developed through communal activity, then necessary for the development of psychotherapeutic practice will be the opportunities for psychotherapists to discuss theory with others in order to share and refine its meaning. What appears important for psychotherapeutic practice is for psychotherapeutic theory to be developed through shared activity, and not impeded by hostility between theoretically based schools of psychotherapy which feel they have more differences than similarities. When theory is seen as a social practice then it appears important for psychotherapists of all theoretical persuasions to attempt to converse in the spirit of solidarity rather than attempt to denigrate others.

Finally, that we are continually reconstructing our identities in relation to one another is also indicative of meaning being continually re-negotiated within the consulting room. The insight garnered from a psychotherapeutic session one week may not seem so important the next. The research shows how this need not devalue the original moment of insight, but instead helps us to understand that the specific context and setting contributed

to its momentary importance, and that subtle changes in identity and relationships occurred as a result of it. That meaning is continually being reconstructed within the psychotherapeutic setting means that we should be wary of any attempt to impose an atemporal certainty in any description of the psychotherapeutic encounter.

Implications for future research

That psychotherapists construct their relationships to theory discursively within a social setting suggests a variety of directions for further research to take. Research into the social conditions that may contribute towards psychotherapists negotiating their relationships to theory in specific ways would be valuable. For instance, what impact do regulatory bodies such as the UKCP have on how psychotherapists construct their relationships to theory? Or how might therapists talk about the theory in discussion with a psychiatrist or a GP compared to a fellow psychotherapist? One would imagine that these different settings would encourage psychotherapists to construct their relationships to theory in certain ways. Gaining further insight into the social and institutional factors that play a role here would be of interest.

Certain findings from the research could also be investigated further. For instance, the categories *Theory as providing respite from therapist anxiety* and *Theory as indicator of professional competence* were thought to have a close relation to one another. It was suggested that if psychotherapeutic competence is closely enmeshed with a demonstrable knowledge of theory, then it is perhaps inevitable that when this identity is threatened – typically due to anxiety originating from psychotherapeutic practice - theory would be considered by the therapist as even more important in order to reassemble this identity. This finding could be explored further in future research. An important question appears to

be, to what extent are psychotherapists' feelings of professional competence based on their understanding of theory? If a great deal – and the present research suggests that this would mean that anxiety experienced by the psychotherapist would engender an even greater dependence on theory - then what implications would this have for their practice and/or the training of therapists?

Phillips appears to consider a similar issue. “So the question is: given his or her training – whatever its theoretical allegiances – what is the repertoire of life-stories the analyst can allow, or allow himself to hear, and consider plausible?” (1994: 70). Future research may attempt to consider what 'life-stories' are encouraged or inhibited through the manner in which psychotherapists relate to theory, and to consider ways in which they may construct their identities to allow openness to the greatest repertoire of life stories possible.

Chapter 7 Critique and Conclusions

The following section will provide an overall critique of the research. Important questions that will be considered include: what were the limitations of using a method of narrative analysis? Did narrative analysis do what it said it would? How did the method affect the findings of the research? Issues of this type will be considered in relation to epistemological and personal reflexivity, leading to further questions such as: what can be said about the knowledge produced in this research? How has the researcher had an impact on the research process? Concluding comments will then be made.

7.1 Narrative analysis: a critique

The reasons for choosing narrative analysis were made evident in chapter three. Despite these reasons being compelling, the researcher found through engaging with the method both intellectually and practically, that narrative analysis entailed certain assumptions that may also be regarded as potential limitations. These will now be discussed.

The focus on narrative

The most obvious facet of narrative analysis to critique is the fact that it places importance on the idea of narrative. Whilst analysing the interviews as narrative provided advantages, it was also felt by the researcher that potentially important aspects of interviews were overlooked as they did not ostensibly appear to be narrative. This was not necessarily simply because the definition of narrative employed in the study was particularly narrow (Andrews et al., 2013), but more that the worth of considering narrative as the starting point of exploration and analysis *itself*, might be questioned.

Something which both plays a role in defining what narrative *is*, and how the subsequent analysis of narrative should be conducted, is *coherence*:

The coherence of participants' narratives, and the investigator's interpretive work with them, is a related facet of trustworthiness. Do episodes of a life story hang together? Are sections of a theoretical argument linked and consistent? Are there major gaps and inconsistencies? Is the analytic account persuasive? (Riessman, 2008: 189).

This understanding of coherence, both in terms of being a constituent of what should be included and defined as narrative, and as key to assessing the validity of the researcher's analysis (see chapter three), may be understood as problematic. This is due to the research seeking to explore theory, which itself may be regarded as a coherent story about psychotherapy.

Phillips (2006) writes the following of coherence:

The patient's presenting or revealing a coherent theme in the associations is always a defence. The analyst's need to find to articulate, a coherent theme, Winnicott intimates, may also be a defence organisation. Psychoanalytic theory, we should remember, is always the presentation of a coherent theme (Phillips, 2006: 26).

There are a couple of points here. Firstly, it appears that as coherence is a facet of: narrative excerpts themselves; the means through which the researcher's interpretations may be understood as valid; and of theory in general, then it seems reasonable to conclude from this that the method of narrative analysis as a whole, to some extent, privileges theory. Theory entails coherence, and coherence is (part of) what narrative

analysis requires. Correspondingly, narrative analysis may therefore be less sensitive to other aspects of psychotherapy which are less theorised and so have, perhaps, less coherence as a result. Secondly, according to Phillips, much, if not all, of what has been analysed as narrative has been a defence, and so perhaps fails to access what participants might actually be meaning when they talk about the importance of theory in their work with clients. Perhaps a greater focus on incoherence: the asides, and apparently meaningless throw-away remarks, may have revealed psychotherapists as saying something different about the importance of theory, and for different relationships they have to theory to potentially emerge.

This point is perhaps given endorsement through consideration of the work of Polkinghorne (1992), in which he details a 'postmodern epistemology of practice', founded on his assertion that “experienced and expert practitioners generate a body of knowledge through their clinical experiences” (1992: 157). Fragmentariness, which refers to “the coming together of a unique set of multiple forces at a particular place and time” (1992: 149), may be regarded as emphasising something very different from coherence, yet is presented by Polkinghorne as a key aspect of this epistemology. If fragmentariness, which ostensibly has more in common with incoherence than with coherence, is suggested to be a foundation of a non-theoretical approach, then we may see how a research method which values coherence as narrative analysis does, may potentially miss out on illuminating less theorised aspects of psychotherapeutic practice.

The analysis

Using Riessman’s (1993; 2008) method presented multiple challenges to the researcher. Her method does not provide clear step-by-step instructions for researchers to follow, and

the researcher found this lack of clear instruction at times difficult.

Presenting narratives according to Labovian (1972) clauses was at times confusing. It was often not clear to the researcher which aspect of a participant's narrative corresponded to which Labovian clause, and narratives were often reappraised to check whether narratives had been partitioned into 'correct' clauses. Ultimately, and perhaps inevitably, there were some parts of narrative which did not easily fit into Labov's criteria. Part of this difficulty was due to narratives often not necessarily being about past events, which is something Labov's criteria focus on.

A further challenge was the analyses. Riessman's (1993) approach appears to present thematic and structural narrative analyses as entwined with one another, alongside what can be regarded as a version of dialogical/performance narrative analysis. These comprised what is referred to as narrative analysis. This viewpoint of narrative analysis comprising these aspects is made evident in the following.

To avoid the tendency to read a narrative simply for content, and the equally dangerous tendency to read it as evidence for a prior theory, I recommend beginning with the structure of the narrative. How is it organized?...Individual's narratives are situated in particular interactions but also in social, cultural, and institutional discourses, which must be brought to bear to interpret them (Riessman, 1993: 61).

Riessman (2008), however, seems to regard these approaches that comprise narrative analysis as more separate. They are then referred to as “a diverse set of methods, a “family” of interpretive approaches” (2008: 183). The researcher's experience was that combining all approaches under the banner of narrative analysis means that a potential

criticism of the research method is that it occupies two irreconcilable ontological positions. Thematic and structural narrative analysis appear to start from the assumption that there is a pre-existing self who tells a story about certain things (thematic narrative analysis) in a certain way (structural narrative analysis), whereas dialogical/performance narrative analysis regards the narrator as one who constructs themselves in the telling of their story. Identities for dialogic/performance narrative analysis are treated as “dynamically constituted in relationships and performed with/for audiences” (Riessman, 2008: 137). The research method then might be said to be lacking in clarity in terms of its ontological position. Does it view the human self as pre-existing the narrative event, or as one which is made there-and-then in the narration?

Whilst this point appears valid, it is nevertheless suggested that the dual (and perhaps contradictory) ontological viewpoints discussed here also reflect what was most appealing about narrative analysis in the first place and what made it appropriate as a method for investigating the research question. Narrative analysis as a whole appears to allow for both humanistic and postmodern conceptions of the subject: as having both an inner self capable of agency but also as being constructed in multiple configurations, by and through, language and culture. It may be said that the three aspects of narrative analysis employed in the present study contribute to both these views of the human subject having weight.

7.2 Epistemic and personal reflexivity

Epistemic reflexivity

The discussion above leads directly into questioning the nature of knowledge that is

provided by the research. As just mentioned, the version of narrative analysis used in the present research appears to straddle different understandings of human subjectivity. Whilst this has been argued as being in synchrony with the aims of the study, it perhaps prevents firm singular conclusions about the knowledge produced from this research from being made.

Narrative analysis was also partly chosen for its close attention to the individual case which involved maintaining the context of their speech. This quality, one of its attractions, nevertheless represented a difficulty, when attempting to formulate and then discuss general conclusions from the findings. Riessman explains that “there is a tension in narrative studies between generalization, on the one hand, and the “unpacking” of speech and close attention to narrative form, on the other” (1992: 70). It is exactly this balancing act which the researcher found testing. The individuality of each participant, so prized in the presentation and analysis of their narrative, is somewhat diminished when aspects of their narratives are assimilated into categories and general concepts. In many ways, this difficulty in generalising again reflects the tension of the research method having both modernist and postmodern principles. In the attempt to conserve the specific story of the participant whilst simultaneously formulating more general findings, narrative analysis brokers a delicate compromise. There appears a valid question about whether this compromise may be regarded as feasible.

The same critique may be offered in terms of the view of language and ontology in Riessman's (1993; 2008) narrative analysis. Whilst narrative analysis was argued as being an appropriate research method in that it allowed held language to be used by participants as both describing a pre-existing inner self, and also being the means of constructing a

self, it is debatable whether keeping both possibilities intact is ever fully possible. In a sense, too much may have been asked of language. On one hand, participants were considered able to articulate their views on the importance to theory with attention and analysis given to these views. On the other, how they may have both deliberately and inadvertently constructed their identities in their narratives were also regarded as important to analyse. Which view of language does the research method favour, and if neither, is such a balance really possible?

Such views of language and ontology have consequences for the researcher and the readers of the research. Do readers regard the participants as revealing pre-existing relationships to theory through the words they use, or do we understand their relationships to theory to be constructed in the the telling of the story? It is also important to note that the researcher cannot remain a member of the audience for long. The interpretations of participants' narratives provide the basis for another story, one authored by the researcher who by his own criteria must also be considered a narrator, and whose story must also be subject to the same analysis.

Such attention to the epistemic lens which narrative analysis leads then inevitably to the question of personal reflexivity, something which will now be discussed.

Personal reflexivity

The ensuing section switches writing style from the third to the first person, as the following section discusses how I, the researcher, have both influenced the research, and have also developed through doing it. To write in the third person when discussing this seems unnecessarily contrived.

I think that part of my motivation for asking the investigating the importance of theory to psychotherapy was an attempt to explore how systematic the work of a psychotherapist was. I had mixed feelings about this, but on the whole, I feel that the idea of the psychotherapist as using a theoretically based method appealed to me. I had come from a more scientific background of experimental psychology, and perhaps regarded the work of a psychotherapist as more akin to that of a scientist. To be a good scientist was important for me, and for that I required a good knowledge of theory.

This relates to some of the stories told by participants in the research, and in particular to the categories of *Theory as providing respite from therapist anxiety* and as being an *indicator of professional competence*. These particular findings both resonate with, and provide insight into, my own experiences. It is difficult to know for sure whether I already had this story, and participants merely helped me to tell it, or that they provided the language for me to make sense of my own experience, but certainly, theory has played a dominant role in my story of becoming a psychotherapist. For me, competence has always been heavily linked to academic achievement, which in turn, relates to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge.

Because of this, I feel that my relationship to theory was, and still is to some extent, one which entails anxiety. Theory, the dominant discourse of psychotherapy, was a language I needed to learn in order to find acceptance in the group. Theorists in psychotherapy, and those most familiar with them, were the authority that I have always held in high-esteem. However, because of the feelings of inferiority brought on by regarding others as so important, I simultaneously resented them and the power they held over me. In this sense,

writing about and researching this topic has enabled me not only to consider my own relationship to theory, but also to knowledge and authority more generally. It has led me to attempt to understand how I have constructed my own identity as a psychotherapist in relation to these concepts. To some extent this has had a therapeutic effect. Awareness of my feelings of inferiority and subsequent frustrations has helped me somewhat. The result has been that I have been a bit more open with my patients; less obstructed by a feeling of what I *ought* to be thinking and doing, happier with a more gradual arc of understanding. This last point is especially important. The anxiety of not knowing enough theory produces a desire to *know* theory. A motive behind my research question I feel now, and it seems so obvious now I don't know why I wasn't aware of it, was to be 'further along' than I was. Not knowing theory, and not feeling a secure and integral member of the psychotherapeutic establishment was difficult to bear, and in many ways fuelled this project.

I feel that my relationship to theory has changed slightly, and like the participants who constructed their relationships to theory through conversation, it may be that writing my thesis has allowed me to negotiate mine through the activity of research. I have perhaps felt under less pressure to *know* theory. Theory continues to interest and excite me but perhaps does not affect my feelings of competence as a psychotherapist to the same extent, and for this I am grateful. I enjoy seeing patients more than previously. I feel more relaxed, and with this, more able to think deeply about what it is they are saying, and what they may be unable to.

With these thoughts in mind, if I were to begin the research again, I would like to place more emphasis on the types and development of relationship that psychotherapists have

with theory. As with growing up and having to re-negotiate relationships with one's parents as fellow adults, the process by which we develop identities as psychotherapists, and how these identities relate to the blend of nurture and authority which may characterise theoretical knowledge, is of interest to me, and would likely be more my focus if I were to undertake the research again.

7.3 Conclusion

This research has provided an exploration, by using a method of narrative analysis, of what psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients. The findings indicated a number of things, including that psychotherapists generally regard theory as important to their work, and that this importance may be related to their feelings of professional identity and the anxiety that may be involved in the maintenance of such an identity. Perhaps the research contributed most to knowledge in psychotherapy though, through demonstrating just how complex psychotherapists' relationships to theory may be, and how these relationships may be constructed and renegotiated through conversations with others. This suggests that theory and practice have a complex relationship, and that theory may be regarded as a form of social activity; something which has not been made apparent in the literature thus far. There are therefore a number of implications for psychotherapeutic practice and for future research in which they may build on this insight. The researcher also wrote about how his relationship to theory has changed, and continues to, through engaging with this research and the questions raised by it. It is his hope that reading this thesis provokes a similar experience for others.

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Appendices

This section is comprised of the following attached materials.

- 1. Ethics application form**
- 2. Risk assessment form**
- 3. Approval of ethics form**
- 4. Participant invitation letter**
- 5. Consent form**
- 6. Debrief letter**

Appendix 1. Ethics application (overleaf)

ETHICS

APPLICATION FORM

(Staff and Research Students)

(March 2014)

MEMBER OF STAFF		RESEARCH STUDENT (MPhil, PhD, EdD, PsychD)	
EXTERNAL INVESTIGATOR		STUDENT (Other)**	
<p>If you are a transfer student or conducting collaborative research you may not need to complete this form: please see Section 2.2. of the Guidelines. **If you are on a taught course you do not need to complete this form unless your project is worth more than 50% of your total credits or you have been asked to do so by your supervisor</p>			
SECTION 1: PERSONAL DETAILS			
Please complete the header with your name and Department			
Name (lead):	Seth Osborne		
Other investigators:			
Correspondence address:	Flat 14, The Old Warehouse, 51 Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1DD		
Telephone no:	07929 722 604		
Email:(all correspondence will be sent by email unless otherwise requested)	seth_osborne@yahoo.co.uk		
FOR STUDENTS ONLY:			
Programme of Study & Department:	PsychD in Psychotherapy and Counselling, Department of Psychology		
Mode of study (full-time/part-time)	Part time		
Director of Studies & Supervisor: (If you are on a taught course please just give the name of your supervisor)	Director of Studies: Dr Onel Brooks Supervisor: Dr Rhiannon Thomas		
FOR EXTERNAL INVESTIGATORS ONLY (please see Section 4.5 of the Ethical Guidelines):			

Name of Academic Assessor:	
----------------------------	--

SECTION 2: PROJECT DETAILS	
Title of project:	<p>What do psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in the work with clients?</p> <p>(Please include name of project on participant documentation if different)</p>
<p>Proposed start date:</p> <p>Please note that approval can take some time.</p> <p>Please submit applications in a timely manner. Reasons should be given for late or retrospective submissions in order to secure approval.</p>	<p>July 2014</p> <p>(Applications should only be submitted retrospectively in exceptional circumstances. These will require the approval of the Chair of the Ethics Committee).</p>
Duration:	12 months
<p>Purpose of the proposed investigation:</p> <p>This section should include the material which concisely outlines the rationale for the project, i.e. why this study needs to be done. This should be done in a way that is both accessible and scholarly, i.e. have proper cited sources.</p>	

The investigation proposes to explore psychotherapists' relationship to, and use of theory in their therapeutic work with clients, through asking how important theory is for their psychotherapeutic work.

The purpose of the investigation is to further explore how psychotherapists may make use of theory, through questioning whether it may be thought of as being the basis for psychotherapy, or whether theory may instead be thought of as being secondary to a starting point of practice (Loewenthal, 2011). This is considered to be an important question by the researcher, as whilst the role of theory in psychotherapy has been the subject of much debate (McLeod, 2003) it has not been clear whether theory should be the basis of psychotherapy or whether it should not be considered fundamental to the enterprise, in which case other aspects of psychotherapy may become more salient (e.g., Heaton, 2010). The proposed investigation will also consider the circumstances in which psychotherapists may change their relationship to theory, that is, when theory may become more (or less) important to them, something which has relevance for the debate on the 'analytic attitude' (Snell, 2013).

The study aims to ask psychotherapists about the importance of theory for their work, and from doing so, gain an increased understanding of the importance that it has for a profession which often seems unclear about how important theory is to it.

References:

Heaton, J. M. (2010) *The Talking Cure: Wittgenstein's Therapeutic Method For Psychotherapy*. New York. Palgrave Macmillan.

Loewenthal, D. (2011) *Post-Existentialism and the Psychological Therapies*. London. Karnac.

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Snell, R. *Uncertainties, Mysteries, Doubts: Romanticism and the analytic attitude*. London. Routledge.

Outline of the project:

This section should include the details of the methods i.e. what will be done and how.

A sample of around 7-8 participants will be recruited, with the criteria for selection being that they are qualified psychotherapists and so are either accredited members of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), or are registered with the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). Psychotherapists must attend clinical supervision at least once a month in order to be considered for inclusion in this research.

Potential participants will be identified by a search of practitioner registers in the area local to the researcher and will be invited to take part by letter (please see Appendix 1). The first eight to respond will be chosen to participate. Participants will be sent a consent form (please see Appendix 2), to be signed and returned to the researcher.

Each participant will be interviewed once for approximately 50 minutes. The interview will be semi-structured. The researcher intends to ask one question at the beginning of the interview: 'How important is theory to your work with clients?'. Further broad questions that pertain to the research may be asked, along with 'probe' questions to elicit further discussion: 'the answers given continually inform the evolving conversation' (Paget, 1983: 78).

Interviews will take place at a time and confidential location that is convenient to the participant. Interviews will be audio-recorded on a dictaphone, and then transcribed. Transcriptions will be stored on a password protected computer accessed only by the researcher and used only for the purposes of the proposed research

All participants will be offered the opportunity to attend a debriefing interview and will be given details of groups that can offer further emotional support (please see Appendix 3).

A method of narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) will be used to interpret the data. This is considered an appropriate research method for my question as it may help shed light on potential discordance between the theory of psychotherapy and the actual practice of it: 'respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often when there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society' (Riessman, 1993: 3).

This is part of a PsychD project that will be produced in the form of a written thesis. The thesis will remain the property of Roehampton University's Department of Psychology. However, the findings from this research may subsequently be used in the public domain in the form of journal articles or book chapters.

References:

Riessman, C. K. (1993) Narrative Analysis. Newbury Park. Sage

Outline of the project (continued):
Please continue on extra sheets if necessary.

Please continue on extra sheets if necessary.

Ethical issues raised by the project and how these will be addressed:

(Points that should be considered include: participants and consent; permissions from organisations involved; confidentiality and anonymity; whether any inclusion/exclusion criteria or special/ vulnerable populations are involved (including under 18s); right to withdrawal; deception; potential risks to participants or researchers)

Ethical issues that have been considered by the researcher in relation to the project include the importance of confidentiality and anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study – issues that will be made clear to the participant as part of the recruitment (see Appendix 1)

In this proposed research project there is the possibility that the interviews will elicit an emotional response from participants. As this is a possibility, the researcher will ensure that appropriate support is available to those who may require it. As all participants will be practising psychotherapists and either members of the BACP or on the UKCP register (the inclusion criteria) they will be in regular supervision with another accredited psychotherapist. Therefore, participants, in the first instance, will be advised to address any issues arising from taking part in this research with their supervisors. However, should this be neither sufficient nor appropriate, a debriefing interview will be offered. In addition to this participants will be provided with a list of organisations (Appendix 3), such as the Samaritans, that they can contact if they feel they need that form of support.

Another measure that may be put in place, will be the procurement of a private space for participants to retire to after the interview should they wish for some quiet time. This may be particularly appropriate should the interview be in an organisational setting.

In giving consent to take part in this research, participants will be agreeing for their interview data to be used as part of a thesis. They will also be agreeing to the possibility that some of the data collected may form part of a journal article or book chapter. This issue will be addressed by anonymising all identifying information, both of the participants themselves, and also the people which they may speak about.

The researcher will ensure that participants are aware that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any point without giving a reason. However if they withdraw before the end of December 2014, at which point the data will have been analysed and will form part of the PsychD thesis, it will only be used in collated form. In accordance with the University's Code of Good Research Practice, data will be retained for up to ten years from publication.

The researcher will adhere to local guidelines and regulations in regard to the Lone Worker Policy when working in unfamiliar locations, and any health and safety procedures will be identified and followed.

SECTION 3: USE OF PARTICIPANTS

- 4) You should download the Participant Consent Form template and amend it as necessary
- 5) You should also attach any other information to be given to participants
- 6) You should consider carefully what information you provide to participants, e.g. scope of study, number of participants, duration of study, risks/benefits of the project. It is recommended that the participant has two copies of the consent form so they can retain one for information.
- 7) If images or anything else which might allow the identification of participants is to be publicly accessible (e.g. on the web), further written consent must be secured. A separate section regarding this should be included on the participant consent form.

Give details of the method of recruitment, and potential benefits or incentives to participants if any (include any financial benefits where appropriate).

(NB: Please remember that written permission – or in some cases ethics approval – will have to be sought from any organisations where recruitment is carried out or posters placed (e.g. if you recruit in GP's surgeries you will require NHS approval)

The researcher proposes to contact therapists in their local area who are listed on both the BACP and UKCP registers and who have made their email addresses available to the public. If a therapist has indicated that they wish to be excluded from canvassing they will not be contacted.

There will not be a financial incentive offered to participants. However, they will be made aware that the interview will allow them to consider an important part of their practice: their relationship to theory. They will also understand that they are helping a trainee therapist at an important stage of their development.

Will you be using participants who are aged under 18?

YES NO

Will you be using participants who might be considered to be vulnerable (please give details if not addressed elsewhere on this form)?

YES NO

If you have answered Yes please refer to the Ethics Guidelines (especially section 4.11 if involving participants who are aged under 18) and highlight the particular issues raised by working with these participants and how these issues have been addressed.

Details of DBS check (date, place of issue and disclosure number)
Please note: if you are unsure whether this is required, please check with Helen Joyes (HR Officer, Operations) and advise us accordingly

SECTION 4: HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. You must download and complete the Ethics Risk Assessment Form (and Overseas Background Information Form if applicable) and attach this to your application.
2. You should be able to demonstrate that appropriate mechanisms are in place for the research to be carried out safely
3. If necessary the Head of Health & Safety should be consulted before the application is submitted

Please give a brief overview of the main risks involved in the project and what will be done to mitigate against these

The only risks include confidentiality and anonymity – both of which will be mitigated through careful handling of data and through anonymising identifying information. There is also a small risk of emotional issues being raised in the interview – how this risk may be minimised and responded to has been previously considered.

<p>Will any of your project take place outside the UK?</p> <p>YES NO</p> <p>Country:</p> <p>If you have answered yes please refer to Section 4.2 of the Ethics Guidelines, complete the Overseas Background Information form and consult with the Head of Health and Safety if necessary. Applicants should adhere to University Guidelines on Foreign Travel. If you are conducting research out of the UK but in your home country or the country in which you reside you should still complete this form.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: it is your responsibility to contact Shamna Finnigan in Finance Department regarding travel assistance and medical cover</p> <p>Please provide translations of participant facing documentation, if required (for student applications, these should be checked by your supervisor prior to submission)</p>
<p>Is this a clinical trial or a project which may involve abnormal risk to participants?</p> <p>YES NO</p> <p>Will 'human tissue' samples need to be stored?</p> <p>YES NO</p> <p>If you have answered Yes please contact the Ethics Administrator who will be able to direct you to the appropriate member of staff dealing with this. Please also refer to Sections 3.5 and 4.2 of the Ethics Guidelines</p>

SECTION 5: PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

How will you disseminate your findings? (e.g. publication)

The findings will be disseminated as part of a PsychD thesis in Psychotherapy and Counselling. The thesis will be the property of the Psychology Department at Roehampton University.

There is the possibility that the findings will also be disseminated as part of a book chapter, a journal article, or at a conference.

How will you ensure the anonymity of your participants?

(If your participants do not wish to remain anonymous you must obtain their written consent.)

Participants will not be named and neither will their localities or workplaces be identified in the research. People that participants refer to will also be anonymised.

SECTION 6: STORAGE OF DATA

Section 2.7 of the University of Roehampton Code of Good Research Practice states the following: 'research data must normally be retained intact for a period of at least ten years from the date of any publication which is based upon it. Researchers should be aware that specific professional bodies and research councils may require a longer period of data retention.'

Data should be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Describe how and where the following data will be stored and how they will be kept secure:

Raw and processed data

Raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home, to which only I have access. All electronic data such as voice recordings and transcripts will be kept on a password protected computer, in password protected files, to which only I have access.

Documents containing personal details of any participants

Any such documents will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet at my home, to which only I have access.

All electronic data such will be kept on a password protected computer, in password protected files, to which only I have access.

SECTION 7: EXTERNAL GUIDELINES, APPROVAL & FUNDING

Are there any relevant subject-specific ethics guidelines (e.g. from a professional society)? If so how will these inform your research process?

Both the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) have research guidelines and therefore these ethical frameworks will be taken into account when conducting this research.

Has/will the project be submitted for approval to the ethics committee of any other organisation, e.g. NHS ethics approval? (Please see Section 4.3, Ethics Guidelines)

No.

What is the outcome of this?

N/A

Is your project externally funded?

(Please note: you do not need to submit an ethics application or gain ethics approval for a project when applying for funding – this can be done when you receive confirmation that the application for funding has been successful)

YES NO If you have answered yes you must complete a P1 form and submit this to RBDO before you complete your ethics application.

Please state the name of the funding organisation/ company below and provide any other relevant information:

Has your P1 form been approved by your Head of Department?

YES NO

SECTION 8: CHECKLIST

Please read through the checklist and check the box to confirm:

NB. this checklist is part of the Ethics Application and must be completed

Project Details

Have you completed your personal details? (Section 1) Yes

Have you outlined the project and ethical issues? (Section 2) Yes

Have you described your project in laymen's terms and avoided using too much technical jargon? Yes

Have you focussed on the ethical issues and practical steps of carrying out the project rather than methodological arguments which are not relevant to this application? Yes

Working with Participants

Have you completed details of how you intend to recruit participants and whether they will receive any reimbursement? (Section 3) Yes

If you are working with under 18s or participants who might be considered to be vulnerable have you addressed the particular ethical issues involved in working with these participants? (Section 3) Yes NA

Have you amended the Participant Consent Form (Template) for your project?

Have you attached any other information to your form that may be needed for participants, e.g. Debriefing Letter, Information Sheet? Yes

Have you attached any other participant-facing materials to your form, e.g. recruitment posters, questionnaire, interview questions? Yes

Have you confirmed that the relevant permissions to recruit/ carry out the project have or will be obtained? Yes

If your project involves clinical trial/s, abnormal level of risk or working with animals have you read University Guidelines carefully? Yes NA

Health and Safety

If your project is taking place outside the UK have you noted on the form where the project will take place, read section 4.2 of the guidelines and completed an Overseas Background Information Form ? Yes NA

If your project is taking place outside the UK, have you provided translations of participant facing documentation if required? Yes NA

Have you completed the Risk Assessment form describing the risks associated with your project and how you will implement control measures to address these? Yes

If your project involves interviews in a participant's home or lone-working have you considered the risks and control measures in the risk assessment? (E.g. advising a colleague/supervisor of the timings of visits, ringing before/ after interview and developing a contingency plan if contact is not made)? Yes

If your project involves clinical trial/s, abnormal level of risk, working overseas or working with animals, have you consulted with the Head of Health & Safety in drawing up your risk assessment? Yes NA


If your project involves clinical trial/s, abnormal level of risk, working overseas or working with animals have you marked this clearly on the form (Section 4) and read sections 3.5 and 4.2 of the guidelines? Yes NA

If observing animals, have you mentioned the possibility of attack (bites/ scratches) and precautions taken in respect of this? Yes NA

If working off site, have you confirmed that local guidelines and regulations will be complied with?	Yes	NA
Do you consider that this project is exceptional such that it requires confirmation from Finance that insurance cover is in place?	Yes	No

Publication of Results		
Have you described on the form how you will publish your findings? (Section 5)	Yes	
Have you described how you will ensure the anonymity of your participants or asked your participants for explicit consent in your consent form to identify them in your research?	Yes	
Storage of Data		
Are you aware that the University's Code of Good Research Practice requires you to retain data intact for a period of at least ten years from the date of any publication? (Specific professional bodies and research councils may require a longer period of data retention.)	Yes	
If a transcription service is to be used, have you included a copy of the confidentiality agreement with your application?	Yes	
Have you described how and where your data will be stored at the University and how this will be kept secure? (Section 6)	Yes	
External Guidelines & Funding		
Have you noted any relevant subject-specific ethics guidelines (e.g. from a professional society) and considered how these will inform your research? (Section 7)	Yes	
Have you considered whether you have to apply for ethical approval through another organisation (e.g. NHS)? (Section 7)	NA	
Have you provided full details of any external funding and the approval stage of your P1 form (staff only)? (Section 7)	NA	
Applicant's Confirmation		
Have you added an electronic signature or typed your name and date in the applicant's signature box?	Yes	
If you are a student has your supervisor checked your application form before submission?	Yes	
If you are a student has your Director of Studies checked your application form and added an electronic signature or typed their name and date on the form?	Yes	
Will you email the Ethics Officer and make sure you attach your Ethics Application Form and all documents, e.g. Participant Consent Form, Risk Assessment Form and any additional information for participants or for other purposes?	Yes	
Presentation		
Have you completed the form using size 12 black font, using one font (e.g. Arial) throughout the form?	Yes	
Have you proof-read your application form and attached documents?	Yes	
Ethics Approval Process		

Please note the following:		
4.	the ethics approval process can take several weeks	Yes Yes
5.	that you must not begin your project or enter into any agreement or contract until you have received email confirmation from the Ethics Officer that you can begin the project	Yes
6.	that the Ethics Application Form will be approved by your Department and the Ethics Committee may be asked to advise on problematic cases	Yes
7.	that you may be asked by the Ethics Officer to make revisions to your form and you will be asked to make these revisions within two weeks from the date of any email sent to you	

SECTION 9: APPLICANT'S CONFIRMATION	
I confirm that the information supplied on this form is correct and confirm that the above checklist has been fully completed.	
Applicant's signature:	Seth Osborne
Date:	30/6/14
FOR STUDENTS ONLY: DIRECTOR OF STUDIES SIGNATURE (Where there is not a Director of Studies this should be completed by the Academic Supervisor)	
<p>The Director of Studies is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. scrutinise the Ethics Application and all participant-facing documentation 6. suggest and check any changes which need making before the form is submitted <p>Please tick the box to confirm that you have approved the application and participant-facing documentation</p>	
Signature:	
Print name:	Onel Brooks
Date:	06/07/2014

Appendix 2. Risk assessment form (overleaf)

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM			
Description of activity	Interviewing participants		Date 18/06/14
Area/Locations	Oxfordshire: Participants' homes/practice rooms/mutually convenient locations.		
Risk assessment team	Name	Job Title	Signed
	Seth Osborne	Researcher	Seth Osborn e
	Onel Brooks	Director of Studies	Onel Brooks
Hazards	8. Emotional distress 9. Discomfort at being audio recorded 10. Lone worker safety at interviews 11. Travelling to and from interviews 12. Electrical equipment/recording equipment/tripping on cables 13. Confidentiality/anonymity 14. Data storage		
Who can be harmed?	Researcher and participant		
How can someone be harmed?	7. The process of being interviewed and the subject matter being discussed could conceivably have an emotional impact on the participant. 8. Participants may dislike being audio recorded 9. Lone working, particularly if travelling to an unknown location with people not previously known to the researcher, may be considered a risk factor. 10. Travelling to and from interviews, like any journey, is potentially dangerous. 11. Some one may trip on cables that may be attached to audio-recording equipment. 12. Confidential information will be discussed at the interview that could compromise the participant or someone they know. 13. Confidential information will be recorded at the interview that could compromise the participant or someone they know.		
Number of people affected	2	Rate Q	H=Hourly, D=Daily, W=Weekly, M=Monthly, Q=Quarterly, S=Six monthly, A=Annually
Consequence	1. The participant might find it difficult to continue the interview 2. The participant may find it difficult to continue the interview		

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The researcher or participant may get lost or find their personal safety threatened 4. The researcher or participant may have an accident travelling to the interview 5. The researcher or participant may trip and hurt themselves. 6. Sensitive information may be misused. 7. Information recorded may be misused. 	
Existing Control Measures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participants are trained therapists and used to discussing emotive topics. The consent form will highlight the subject of the interview and participants will be aware that they can withdraw from the research at any stage. 2. Participants are aware before the interview commences that they will be audio-recorded and can stop the recording if necessary. 3. The researcher will plan journeys so is unlikely to get lost or find themselves in an unsafe location. The participants will be registered psychotherapists and so are unlikely to represent obvious risk in the sense that they subscribe to a code of ethics. 4. Usual transport safety measures are followed. 5. Wireless equipment will be used. 6. The researcher, as a trainee therapist, is familiar in maintaining confidentiality 7. The researcher, as a trainee therapist, is adept and experienced at making client notes and storing them securely. 	
Comments		
Bibliography		
Risk rating	L	VH=Very High, H=High, M=Medium, L=Low, VL=Very Low
Further possible control measures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participants will be reminded in the interview of their right to withdraw at any point during the interview. Breaks will be offered if necessary. A debrief interview will be offered. The researcher has regular contact with his therapist and supervisor for further discussion. 2. Regular breaks will be offered. Participants will be reminded that they are free to withdraw from the study whenever they wish. 3. The 'Lone Working Policy' will be adhered to. 4. Usual transport safety procedures are followed. 5. Potential hazards in the interview room will be removed/minimized. 6. Names of the participants and others discussed in the interview will be disguised/coded. 7. Transcriptions from interviews will be stored on a password protected computer; data backed-up on a monitored USB stick. Paper copies will be kept in a 	

		locked safe.		
Any further actions required				
Responsible person	Description of hazard	Details of action taken	Date	Completed
Date to be reviewed		To be reviewed by (name)		
Signed (Applicant)		Seth Osborne	Print Name and Date Seth Osborne – 30.6.14	
Signed (Lead Assessor, if different from applicant)				

Appendix 3. Approval of ethics form

Jan.Harrison@roehampton.ac.uk

Dear Seth, Ethics Application Applicant: Seth Osborne Title: What do psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in the work with clients? Reference: PSYC 14/ 138 Department: Psychology
To seth_osborne@yahoo.co.uk seth_osborne@yahoo.co.uk
CC L.Slade@roehampton.ac.uk O.Brooks@roehampton.ac.uk
08/14/14 at 2:22 PM

Dear Seth,

Ethics Application

Applicant:Seth Osborne

Title: What do psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in the work with clients?

Reference: PSYC 14/ 138

Department: Psychology

Many thanks for your response and the amended documents. Under the procedures agreed by the University Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that your Department has confirmed that all conditions for approval of this project have now been met. We do not require anything further in relation to this application.

Please note that on a standalone page or appendix the following phrase should be included in your thesis:

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference PSYC 14/ 138 in the Department of Psychology and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 14.08.14.

Please advise us if there are any changes to the research during the life of the project. Minor changes can be advised using the Minor Amendments Form on the Ethics Website, but substantial changes may require a new application to be submitted.

Many thanks,

Jan

Jan Harrison

Ethics Officer, Research Office, Department of Academic Enhancement

University of Roehampton | London | SW15 5PJ

Appendix 4. Research Invitation Letter (overleaf)

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear

I am looking for participants to interview for my doctoral research with the University of Roehampton. I am interested in exploring psychotherapists' views on how important theory is to their work with clients.

I thought that the following information would be helpful to you when making your decision regarding participation:

Purpose of the study

This is a qualitative research study which aims to explore what psychotherapists say about how important theory is to their work with clients. For the research, I intent to interview 7-8 participants (psychotherapists).

Expectation of participants

You will be invited to participate in an audio-recorded interview lasting approximately 50 minutes. The interview will take place at an appropriate location convenient for you. This interview will be about how important theory is in your psychotherapeutic work.

Confidentiality

If you agree to take part in the study you will be required to sign the attached consent form indicating approval to the recording of the interview and participation in the research.

All your personal details will be anonymised as will others you discuss and any other potentially identifying information. All collected data will be securely stored at all times.

You will not be asked to divulge any confidential information about particular clients, as the focus will be in your views on the importance of theory in psychotherapeutic practice. Should any confidential details emerge, however, potentially identifying information will be appropriately anonymised.

Right to withdraw

All participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from participating in the research at any time (however, as it may not be possible to remove data from a written up-report, some data may still be used in a collated form).

Findings and publication

You may request from me a summary of the study's findings by providing your contact details. The findings of the research project may be published in journals but anonymity and confidentiality will be upheld at all times.

Reimbursement

Unfortunately no costs related to the participation will be reimbursed.

Risks

Although it is unlikely, it is possible that you may experience emotional distress during or subsequent to the interview. As previously stated, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may also request a break from the interview should you wish. I also reserve the right to terminate the interview at any point should you, or indeed I, become excessively distressed during the interview.

Should you experience distress subsequent to the interview as a result of participation you may refer to contact details for help-lines and therapeutic services which will be supplied in the debrief information sheet.

Further information or complaints:

Should you any part of this research be a cause of complaint please contact my supervisors to address any grievances:

Director of Studies:

Dr Onel Brooks
Department of Psychology
Whitelands College
University of Roehampton
Holybourne Avenue
SW15 4JD
o.brooks@roehampton.ac.uk
Tel: 0208 392 3615

Head of Department:

Dr Diane Bray
Department of Psychology
University of Roehampton
Whitelands College
London SW15 4JD
Email: d.bray@roehampton.ac.uk
Tel: [+44 \(0\) 20 8392 3000](tel:+44(0)2083923000)

Yours sincerely

Seth Osborne (doctoral student and researcher)

Department of Psychology
Email: osbornes11@roehampton.ac.uk
Tel: **07929722604**

Appendix 5. Consent Form (overleaf)

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

'What do psychotherapists say about the importance, if any, of theory in their work with clients?'

Brief Description of Research Project:

This research project is interested in exploring how psychotherapists regard the importance of theory to their psychotherapeutic practice. Interview questions will be used to ask psychotherapists about how important they feel theory is to their work with clients. 6 – 8 participants will be recruited.

Participants will take part in a single audio-recorded interview lasting approximately one hour. Participants will be asked if they would want to be interviewed at the university or their place of work. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed; the data will be included in the research.

Investigator Contact Details:

Seth Osborne

Psychology Department, Whitelands College, Roehampton University, Holybourne Avenue, SW15 4JD

osbornes11@roehampton.ac.uk

Tel: 07929722604

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other

queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department.

Director of Studies Contact Details:

Dr Onel Brooks
Department of Psychology
Whitelands College
Holybourne Avenue
London
SW15 4JD
o.brooks@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3615

Head of Department Contact Details:

Dr Diane Bray
Department of Psychology
Whitelands College
Holybourne Avenue
London
SW15 4JD
d.bray@roehampton.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 8392 3627

Appendix 6. Debrief letter (overleaf)

DEBRIEF INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for taking part in this research project. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns that have arisen as a result of your participation, I am available to discuss these with you.

My contact details are as follows:

Seth Osborne

Psychology Department, Whitelands College, Roehampton University, Holybourne Avenue, SW15 4JD

osbornes11@roehampton.ac.uk

Tel: 07929722604

You can also contact me if you would like to request a copy of the research findings or wish to withdraw. If you would like to do this, please quote your participant identification number shown at the top of this information sheet.

Complaints

To address any grievances in relation to this research project, please contact either of the following:

Director of Studies:

Dr Onel Brooks

Psychology Department

Whitelands College

Roehampton University

Holybourne Avenue

SW15 4JD

o.brooks@roehampton.ac.uk

Tel: 0208 392 3615

Head of Department

Dr Diane Bray

Department of Psychology

University of Roehampton

Whitelands College

London SW15 4JD

Email: d.bray@roehampton.ac.uk

Tel: [+44 \(0\) 20 8392 3000](tel:+442083923000)

Additional support

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

www.bacp.co.uk

01455 883300

British Psychological Society (BPS)

www.bps.org.uk

0116 254 9568

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

www.psychotherapy.org.uk

020 7014 9955

The Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

08457 90 90 90

Offer a helpline available 24 hours a day, 365 days the year

Your GP will also be able to advise you of available support services in your local area.